Strategies for Inclusive Courses: Workshop Activity

Activity

1) Please rate each strategy in the following way:

⎯ Strikethrough any strategy not appropriate for your course(s)

✓ I already do this in my class

≈ I sort of do this, but I could make it more explicit/visible

✴ I'd like to try this

2) Discuss one ✓ with each other.

3) Discuss how you might strengthen an item marked with ≈ or ✴ with each other.

Please Note: This is *not* a 'checklist'. Using these strategies does *not* guarantee an inclusive learning environment. Creating inclusive courses requires effort, attention, and intention.

Design an Inclusive Course Curriculum

- Use visuals that do not reinforce stereotypes, but do include diverse participants.
- Choose readings that consciously reflect the diversity of contributors to your field; consider whether tradition-based reading lists represent past or present stereotypes.
- Use varied names and socio-cultural contexts in test questions, assignments, and case studies.
- Analyze the content of your examples, analogies, colloquialisms, assumptions, and humor. Who might resonate with them? Who could be excluded by them?
- Invite guest speakers who have varied backgrounds and experiences and are sensitive to the diversity of your students.
- Recognize that your choices of materials, readings, and content organization reflect your perspectives, interests, and possible biases.
- Investigate and teach the conflicts of your field to incorporate diverse perspectives to acknowledge the value of learning through contrasts and disagreements.
- Consider your academic traditions and the biases that they may inadvertently reinforce.
- Deliberately choose course materials with students' varied financial resources in mind.
- Ensure that course materials are accessible for all students (e.g., pictures have alternative text, videos are correctly captioned, use formatting styles).
- Review content for implicit exclusions by asking what perspectives and whose voices are missing.

Motivate Learning/Establish Relevance

- Relate specific topics within a course to previous and future topics.
- Provide students opportunities to make connections inside and outside of the course.
- Situate the course in a broader global and/or societal context.
- Connect the course to other courses within or outside of the major.
- Discuss how the course will help students function more effectively with a diversity of people.
- Use personal anecdotes to create interest among students.

Meet your students as individuals & create opportunities for students to do the same

- Examine your background and experiences and how they impact your pedagogy (so that you understand how your students see you!).
- Learn and use students' preferred names and pronouns.
- Make the effort to correctly pronounce students' names; not doing so may signal that you do not see them as individuals or that they are not worth your time.
- Avoid making assumptions; let people self-identify their experiences and identities.
- Avoid assuming the gender of any student.
- Provide opportunities for students to learn about each other and from each other.
- Do not ask or expect students to represent an entire group, either by look or by request.
- Learn about and honor cultural differences in nonverbal and verbal communication (e.g., use of personal space, directness, use of storytelling).
- Ask about students' interests in, experiences with, and concerns about the subject matter.
- Ask about students' interests, backgrounds, social identities, learning habits.
- Do not ask individuals with hidden disabilities to identify themselves in class.
- Do not assume all students speak English fluently or that all students understand cultural or popular references.
- Ensure that the physical classroom space is inclusive for all students (e.g. are students who are alternately-abled marginalized in some way?).
- Avoid religious holidays when scheduling tests and consider religious fasting when offering food.
- Avoid expressing racially charged or other political opinions.

Create an Inclusive Course Environment

- Set high standards and communicate your confidence that students are capable of achieving them.
- Express or demonstrate pride in student achievement.
- Let your students know that you believe each has important contributions to make.
- Applaud creative solutions and sincere efforts to learn.
- Help students understand that intelligence is not a fixed ability, not all academic challenges are a result of personal inadequacies, and many academic challenges can be overcome. Share how you or others have overcome academic challenges.
- Talk to students about how they learn best and how to adopt helpful strategies.
- Early in the course, invite students to create class norms, such as ground rules for discussion. Revisit and or revise these norms as needed throughout the semester.
- Use a variety of strategies to encourage contributions and reduce over-participation by verbally assertive students (e.g. use a queue, ask to hear from other students, wait for several hands to be raised before calling on students, or use writing, pairs, or small groups to seed discussion).
- Create a culture of shared-purpose by periodically collecting feedback to learn how students are experiencing your course.
- Avoid assuming that a student needs assistance or expressing surprise when a student does well, which can convey that you have low expectations and could further hinder learning.
- Do not ignore or change the subject when students voice negative comments about a group; silence implies agreement.
- Make diversity and the free-exchange of ideas an early discussion topic. Assist students to identify similarities and differences in their contributions or viewpoints.
- Do acknowledge events/incidents that may communicate that some students' are not welcome or valued; acknowledge differential impacts on students may impact some students' learning.

Provide Varied Opportunities for Success/Achievement

- Allow students to demonstrate their learning and accumulate grade points in a variety of ways.
- Foster student choice and control by allowing students to select the weighting of different aspects of the course or selecting select topics to study.
- Provide explicit information about the purpose of assignments, the skills/knowledge gained, steps students should follow
- Use grading rubrics or matrices to communicate that all students will be assessed using the same standards (rather than stereotypes or assumptions).
- Allow students to collaborate/cooperate on homework and class assignments.
- Offer a variety of ways for students to participate in class other than speaking aloud.
- Provide information about how students should allocate time on assignments and help them prioritize tasks.
- Use inclusive language (e.g. "people" vs. "mankind" and "everyone" vs. "you guys").

Teach Inclusively

- Use a variety of teaching methods; do not rely solely on lectures and didactic questions.
- Use pictures, schematics, graphs, simple sketches, films, and demonstrations.
- Provide a balance of concrete information (facts, data, real or hypothetical experiments) and abstract concepts (principles, theories, models).
- Anticipate disagreements, expect respect during the exchange of disagreement, and acknowledge the value of learning through contrasts and conflicts.
- Validate and recognize students' experiences as worthy knowledge. Build on students' prior knowledge.
- Consider integrating into assignments historical interviews, autobiographical writing, and activities that students will do in their future professions.
- Encourage multiple perspectives (as opposed to consensus) in discussions.
- Balance material that emphasizes practical problem-solving methods with that emphasizing fundamental understanding.
- Provide brief intervals during class for students to think about what they have heard, seen, & learned.
- Provide opportunities for students to use or apply the course material/content.
- Have students work on class activities in pairs, triads, or small groups.
- Assign group membership randomly. Do not allow students to choose their own groups.
- Allow students to work on projects that explore their own social identities or the impacts of different identities within your field.
- Provide both verbal and written instructions; this can be helpful for students with processing disabilities as well as second-language learners).