Inclusive Teaching Online – Reflecting on Your Practice[1]

Content

> Do you or would you use any of the following strategies?
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❑ Choose readings that deliberately reflect the diversity of contributors to the field.

❑ Include authors' full names, not just initials, in citations. (This can help emphasize diversity and unsettle assumptions about authorship.)

❑ Emphasize the range of identities and backgrounds of experts who have contributed to a given field.

❑ In fields where certain foundational/canonical readings are required or where there isn't a diversity of contributors, call attention to this and interrogate the structural reasons why. (A powerful example from economics is here.) Ask students to review content and identify which populations, histories, and points-of-view are valued, scrutinized, or excluded.

❑ Teach the conflicts of the field to incorporate diverse perspectives.

❑ Use visuals and examples that do not reinforce stereotypes but do include a variety of people and draw on a range of roles/contexts. For a free repository of clip art, try https://www.blackillustrations.com

❑ Analyze the content of your examples, analogies, and humor to make sure they don't alienate students who have different views or background knowledge.

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1 This handout is adapted from a resource by the University of Michigan's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, which adapted some content from Linse and Weinstein, Shreyer Institute for Teaching Excellence, Penn State, 2015. It also draws on work by Sue et al. and J. Luke Wood and Frank Harris III on recognizing and responding to microaggressions, and on several institutions resources for inclusive virtual learning, collected here. For more on the evidence supporting these strategies, see http://crlt.umich.edu/node/90467

❑ Plan to explain specific cultural references (e.g., "If you're familiar with X, you might know that…") and/or avoid references that are likely to be unfamiliar to some students. Don't assume familiarity with experiences such as air travel, Christian holidays, or U.S. high schools.

❑ Use varied names and socio-cultural contexts in test questions, assignments, and case studies.

❑ When selecting materials, try to find video and audio content that is already captioned in accordance with ADA standards (information on how to search YouTube for captioned videos is here).

❑ To help students who are blind, have difficulty reading from a screen, or are otherwise unable to view video or slides, narrate the material you are presenting on screen by describing charts and images.

❑ Deliberately choose course materials with a range of student physical abilities in mind.

❑ Deliberately choose course materials with students' range of financial resources in mind.

❑ Avoid generalizing about what might be easy or difficult for students to understand or do.

Instructional Practices

Do you or would you use any of the following strategies?

√ = I already use this in my teaching

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❑ Assess students' prior knowledge about your field and topics so that you can accurately align instruction with their needs.

❑ Help students connect their prior knowledge to new learning (e.g., before introducing a new topic, ask students individually to reflect on what they already know about the topic).

❑ Use a variety of teaching methods and modalities (verbal, visual, interactive, etc.) rather than relying on one mode of engagement.

❑ Ask students for concrete observations about content (e.g., a reading, image, set of data) before moving to analytical questions. (This can give everyone a common starting point and model analytical processes you want to teach.)

❑ Clarify the expectations and grading scheme for each assignment.

❑ Provide ample time for students to discuss and ask questions about assignments or assignment expectations.

❑ Instead of asking, "Any questions?" which is open-ended and may make students feel vulnerable about their lack of understanding, ask students, "What is most complex or confusing here?" to isolate trouble spots.

❑ Emphasize the larger purpose or value of the material you are studying.

❑ When raising potentially sensitive or uncomfortable topics, be mindful of how you frame or introduce them and what you hope the lesson will accomplish.

❑ Structure discussions to include a range of voices: e.g., have students share discussion questions that you use as a basis for synchronous work, ask to hear from those who have not spoken, ask everyone to share, use your video-chat software's breakout room feature to do think-pair-share activities, or ask students to send their questions to you via the chat feature.

❑ Model and encourage your students to use inclusive language—e.g., "parent" or "caregiver" instead of "mom and dad."

❑ Use brief writing activities such as minute papers to get feedback on what students are learning and thinking. For example, at the end of a session, ask students to write down one thing they learned from another student and one thing they're still confused about.

❑ For international students and others who may struggle with Standard Written English, clarify which assignments and activities will be evaluated for fluency in language and grammar and which (such as discussion posts) will be more focused on content. Ignore non-standard uses of English unless they are relevant to your assessment criteria.

❑ Use cover sheets (sometimes called "exam wrappers") on tests to encourage students to reflect on their learning process. Ask students what they found most challenging, what affected their performance, how they prepared, and what they would do differently next time.

❑ On major writing projects, promote reflection by having students use the Track Changes function to submit 3-5 comments reflecting on the choices they made and where they struggled while writing (more information and examples can be found here).

❑ Consider using blind grading methods when appropriate.

Instructor-Student Interactions

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❑ Clarify how you want students to address you (title, pronouns, etc.).

❑ Ask students to fill out background questionnaire early in the term to learn about their experience with the course topics, educational background, professional ambitions, general interests, areas of concern, etc.

❑ Commit to consciously learning about how students see themselves and how their identity affects their learning. Rather than telling students that you don't notice their identity traits (e.g., "you're all the same to me"), pledge to, as Shana V. White says, "recognize and respect your identity traits" and "care enough to understand and learn more about those identity traits in order to make me a better educator."

❑ Ask students on a questionnaire or during a virtual meeting, "What are the barriers to your success in this class, and how can I help you overcome them?"

❑ Encourage students to set up individual conversations with you, and use that time to ask about their experiences with course topics as well as their interests outside the class. If possible, require one-on-one conferences scheduled at a mutually convenient time so that every student is able to attend (to help with scheduling and workload, you might decide to convert a synchronous class session into asynchronous one-on-one meetings).

❑ Consider scheduling occasional informal, optional synchronous video sessions open to the whole class that serve as a social hour where students can ask questions or just chat and get to know each other and you better.

❑ Communicate high expectations and your belief that all students can succeed.

❑ Allow for productive risk and failure. Make it known that struggle and challenge are important parts of the learning process, not signs of student deficiency.

❑ Where possible, build the possibility for improvement into the course structurally—e.g., by dropping the lowest quiz grade or allowing a revised paper to be averaged with an original grade.

❑ Communicate concern for students' well-being, and share information about campus resources (e.g., Counseling and Psychological Services, academic advising).

❑ Reach out to students who are struggling or falling behind to let them know you are eager to support their learning and to connect them to appropriate sources of help.

❑ Communicate in writing and verbally your goal of making learning equally accessible to all students.

❑ Welcome requests for documented accommodations as a chance to include everyone more fully in learning.

❑ Frame accessibility as for everyone, not just those with documented disabilities—e.g., a syllabus statement like, "Everyone has different needs for learning. If you do not have a documented disability but feel that you would benefit from learning support for other reasons, and/or if you have substantial non-academic obligations or other concerns that make learning difficult, I invite you to contact me."

❑ Flag ahead of time when you're discussing topics that may be particularly difficult for certain students (e.g., discussions of sexual assault for survivors), and be flexible about how you allow students to respond (e.g., missing all or part of a class session or completing an alternative assignment).

❑ Avoid giving verbal instructions without a written corollary. (Multiple modes can be especially helpful to students with different learning preferences, those with processing disabilities, and non-native English speakers.)

❑ Allow ample time for any activities, such as spontaneous peer review, that require substantial reading, and provide guidance that reflects the fact that processing times will vary (e.g., how to approach the task given you may not finish reading, or what to do if you do finish it before the time is up).

❑ Elicit formative feedback from students about their learning experiences in the course (e.g. a facilitated mid-semester feedback session or anonymous survey).

❑ Ask an educational developer or peer to join a synchronous session and/or look into your course discussion boards and share observations about how you include or interact with different students.

Student-Student Interactions

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❑ Encourage students to learn and use one another's names and pronouns, and create opportunities for them to do so.

❑ Use icebreakers regularly, not just on the first day of class, so students can learn about one another. (A sample that highlights students' achievements is: "One small victory I've had today/this week is…" You could also try "vent and validate," where students talk about what they're struggling with and others express support.)

❑ Establish guidelines, ground rules, or community agreements for class participation. When possible, have students come up with these together on the first day of class.

❑ Have students work in pairs, triads, or small groups.

❑ Instead of always letting students choose groups, deliberately assign students to small, heterogeneous groups that do not isolate underserved students. Employ strategies to mix up and/or randomize these groups—e.g., using the randomized breakout rooms feature in Blackboard Collaborate.

❑ For long-term teams, structure in check-ins and opportunities for peer feedback about group processes.

❑ Occasionally monitor breakout rooms, group meetings, and discussion posts to ensure that they are safe and respectful environments and to help students develop strategies to respond to conflicts.

❑ Have students write and share about how their background can contribute to a particular class activity.

❑ Provide students opportunities to reflect on what they learned through collaborative activities (formal or informal).

❑ Have students complete a self-assessment inventory and discuss with peers.

❑ Have students complete low-stakes small group activities that help them see and value the contributions of others.
❑ Create informal digital spaces, such as a continuously available Blackboard Collaborate room, where students can chat informally, bounce ideas around, and share knowledge and study tips without instructor intervention or evaluation.

❑ Establish ways for students to intervene if they feel a certain perspective is being undervalued or not acknowledged.

Additional Practices (optional)

List 3 practices not listed here that you are applying already or want to apply to promote inclusivity

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