Inclusive Teaching

Inclusive teaching practices improve student success metrics[1] and help each student feel welcomed, valued, heard, and supported. While these strategies help all students succeed in their learning, they are especially important for the success of students from minoritized backgrounds (e.g., students with a range of abilities, differently abled, students of color, English language learners, etc.) and can help close equity gaps in student success.[1] To build off of the [Equity in the Classroom](#) statewide event, we are sharing innovative practices for inclusive teaching within three core areas, below.

Toolkit of Inclusive Teaching Practices:

[1] Foster belonging

We all receive cues about whether or not we belong in a particular space, community, or environment. These cues can come from someone's body language or tone of voice. They can come from imagery that shows the type of people who belong within the space (e.g., white women depicted in nursing textbooks) or the types of resources that are available (e.g., welding equipment that only fits male students). Ultimately, these cues and our sense of belonging affects our behavior, happiness, health, well-being, and performance. Thus, to help our students succeed, we need to foster belonging across our campuses and in our classrooms. Here are two steps to foster belonging:

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[1] University of Michigan. 2020. [The Research Basis for Inclusive Teaching](#). Center for Research on Learning and Teaching.

- Correctly pronounce and use students' preferred names and pronouns.
  - Before class starts, you may be able to find pronunciations online (e.g., Hear Names) that will help you better pronounce a student's name on the first day of class.
  - When introducing yourself to your class, share *your* pronouns. This act will then normalize the practice for your students. For information on pronouns, visit mypronouns.org.
  - Ask students how to pronounce their names, to make sure that you are pronouncing it correctly and write down their names phonetically. For more information and perspectives on this topic, see Jennifer Gonzalez's post on How we pronounce student names, and why it matters.
- Include diverse examples and viewpoints within your course materials and environment

  - First, take an inventory. Within your course materials, what identities are and are not represented? Do the examples reinforce identity stereotypes or challenge them?
  - Second, consider ways in which to incorporate perspectives and experiences from the missing or underrepresented identities into the curriculum, through highlighting speakers, case studies, examples, authors, mentors, using Open Educational Resources, etc.

- One way to invite diverse perspectives into the classroom is to share your own story and invite students to tell theirs. Then, seek ways to incorporate what you learn about your classroom community into course content.
- Note, that this can be an iterative process, in which you incorporate a couple of diverse perspectives and examples with each semester that you teach the course.

For more information on belonging, including the research on the importance of belonging and steps to foster belonging, visit the Belonging for Educators course from the PERTS (Project for Education Research that Scales) Mindset Kit. While this course was created for K-12 teachers, the lessons and information are helpful and applicable for college, as well (e.g., See Columbia University's Inclusive Teaching Guide that emphasizes belonging and PERTS belonging course for college students) or NAPE's Eliminating Barriers through Culturally Responsive Teaching Toolkit. Also check out the WTCS video on How to create an inclusive classroom.

[2] Engage growth mindsets

Mindsets fall along a spectrum from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset. Students with a fixed mindset view intelligence and academic achievement as something that they are born with that does not change, whereas students with a growth mindset believe that they can improve their mastery of a subject by engaging in the material and their learning. These differences in mindsets shape student success. Students with growth mindsets perform better in school and even have greater brain activity when receiving feedback on their academic work. Fortunately, mindsets are malleable, and incorporating lessons about mindsets in class can help encourage growth mindsets in your students (Mindset Kit, PERTS). Here are a few steps to engage growth mindsets:

- Include a lesson on growth mindset in your course. See the Mindset Kit's [mini-lesson on brain growth](), which includes videos and guided questions to learn about the neuroscience behind growth mindsets. Also, see PERTS [growth mindset course for college students]().

- Reflect on your own learned associations and how they impact your mindset related to different groups of students
  - Notice the way you respond to a new group of students. Do you frame their backgrounds as providing them rich cultural experiences that can support their learning or do you perceive them as coming in with a lack of knowledge or skills due to their past experiences?
  - Lowering expectations for some groups of students based on their perceived background or abilities can have a lasting negative impact on their academic performance, confidence, and self-efficacy. Reflect on your expectations and feeling of responsibility for each student's learning. Are there differences between students who align with dominant culture and those who do not?

- Consider how you provide feedback and praise to students.
  - To encourage growth mindsets, structure feedback to include information about where the student is in their learning (e.g., for competency A, you have

mastered X, but have not yet mastered Y), where they need to be (e.g., what does mastery of competency A look like?), and how to close this gap (what can the student do to gain mastery?). For more information, see the [Mindset Kit's lesson on assessments.](#)

- o Also, frame praise in terms of the work and effort that the student put in. For instance, rather than saying 'Great job! You must be a natural at this', say 'Great job! You must have worked hard to learn this material.'

For more information on growth mindsets, see PERTS [Mindset Kit](#) and their [college course on growth mindsets](#).

[3] Employ Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) focuses on providing multiple accessible ways and modes for students to engage in class. Whereas traditionally, educators react and respond to accommodations requests to adapt course material, this UDL framework is proactive in that the course is designed to be accessible for all kinds of learners. No matter who the students are and what accommodations they may or may not need, they can engage in the class and demonstrate their learning in a way that best suits their needs. In addition, this course design helps all learners. For example, providing transcripts of recorded lessons for hearing impaired students, also allows all students to easily search transcripts using key words to find content that they need to review. Here are a few steps to implement UDL practices in your class:

- The first step to creating a UDL course, is better understanding the different types of needs of diverse learners. To better understand accessibility needs, read through [accessibility personas](#) (from BC Campus's [Accessibility Toolkit – 2nd Edition](#)) that provides information on and demos of assistive technologies and a few common accessibility needs of students.

- Provide information in a variety of different formats. This practice allows students to learn in a way that fits their learning style and abilities best or to reinforce understanding through using multiple modes of learning.
  - o Examples can include giving students options to engage by reading, listening, watching, discussing with others, reflecting on their own and manipulating objects.
  - o Watch this [video for an overview of Universal Design of Instruction](#) and examples given by instructors that have employed UDL principals in their courses.

- When creating course materials (word documents, power point, etc.), follow best practices for accessibility. These practices include providing informative alternative text for images, using the font styles to provide structure and easy navigation within documents, making hyperlinks obvious with words that describe what the link is, etc.

  - o Visit WikiHow's webpage on '[How to Create Accessible Word Documents'](#) that provides helpful tips, step-by-step tutorials and a video demonstration.

- See BC Campus's [accessibility checklist](#) for things to keep in mind when creating content.
    - Use the accessibility checker available in Microsoft Suite programs. For a tutorial on how to use this accessibility tool, visit Microsoft's webpage on '[Improving Accessibility with the Accessibility Checker](#).'
    - Use the Digital Library Federation's [guidelines for creating accessible presentations.](#)

- When available, provide multiple assessment modes for students to choose how to demonstrate their mastery of course competencies and provide clear and transparent rubrics for these assessments. Examples include:
    - Portfolios that incorporate student reflection of their work and learning
    - Demonstration and observation of learning tasks (e.g., students create a how-to-video for a task, role playing of workplace scenarios)
    - Assessments for understanding and analysis of concepts: spoken word, podcast, oral presentation, poster presentation, essay/writing assignment, designing a webpage, etc.
    - Individual or group assessments that provide a variety of ways to demonstrate knowledge (multiple choice, short answer, reading and responding, etc.)

For more information on UDL and the guidelines for engagement, representation, and action/expression, visit [udlguidelines.cast.org](#). Also, check out BC Campus's [activity on redesigning courses and providing accommodations](#) (from the open [Accessibility Toolkit – 2nd Edition](#)).

For more information, see…

WTCS resources

- WTCS [System-wide Equity Report](#)
- WTCS DEI Definitions[link]
- [60 Forward resources](#) & [youtube channel](#) of WTCS videos on diversity, equity and inclusion

External toolkits, webinars and resources on inclusive teaching

- [Teaching Tolerance](#) and the [Equity Matters webinar](#) series (developing empathy, confronting implicit bias, equity literacy)
- [Equity Toolkit](#) from Colorado
- [Creating Inclusive College Classrooms](#) from the Center for Research on Learning & Teaching at the University of Michigan
- [Eliminating Barriers through Culturally Responsive Teaching](#) from National Alliance for Partnerships in Equity

- [Bias Cleanse](#) provides daily tasks via email to help counter implicit biases and change our associations
- [The Center for Universal Design in Education](#) from the University of Washington

Teaching assessment

- [Reflecting on your practice: Applying inclusive teaching principles](#) assessment from the Center for Research on Learning & Teaching at the University of Michigan

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