

Teaching Tip Tuesday

Inclusive Instruction Ideas

Becoming an Inclusive Instructor

Inclusive instruction occurs when instructors mindfully adopt pedagogical approaches that are **equitable**, providing all students with the opportunity to reach their potential, and **welcoming**, cultivating all students' sense of belonging in the course, in the discipline, and at the university. It requires recognition of student diversity in prior lived experiences, social identities, attitudes, goals, economic status, neurodivergence, and physical or mental disabilities, as well as attention to making instruction accessible to all, while validating student diversity. Becoming an inclusive instructor is a journey—not a destination—and like all journeys, it begins with one step. As you develop your courses, consider implementing one of the following inclusive instruction practices.

Simple Ways to Increase Inclusivity in your Course

- **Reconsider your syllabus design.** Implicitly or explicitly, your syllabus contains information about who belongs and is valued in your classroom, and your level of respect for students. Consider both tone and content, as well as what you are choosing to communicate in this document.
- **Incorporate diverse voices and emphasize the value of diverse perspectives.** Remember that representation matters. Students are more likely to develop a sense of belonging and persist in disciplines in which they see a reflection of their identities. Consider incorporating diverse voices (e.g. literature by authors from diverse cultures and ethnicities), or highlighting the diversity of scholars to whom you refer (e.g. scientists who are women, queer, neurodivergent, etc.).
- **Promote inclusive participation.** Be transparent about the type of participation you expect students to engage in, and mindful of who may be excluded by your conceptions of participation. Are you interested in quality, quantity, or both? Provide students with time to gather and express their thoughts and discuss in small groups before asking them to speak in front of the class. If attendance is mandatory, consider how to include students with attendance limitations, such as parents, caregivers, and those with chronic health issues.
- **Demystify the culture of higher education.** Many students, especially first-generation students, lack a complete understanding of the norms and expectations of higher education. Take time to transparently explain things that those unfamiliar with the college environment might not understand, like expectations about the amount of study expected per credit hour, the purpose of office hours, and the importance of excellence, rather than adequacy.
- **Emphasize active learning.** All students benefit when they actively engage with content in discussion, case studies, gaming, and problem solving. These activities may also increase inclusiveness by reducing achievement gaps in students from underrepresented minorities and low-income backgrounds.
- **Collect student feedback about the course often.** Valuing the students' experience with your course demonstrates both respect for them, and interest in making your course more effective. Students may identify barriers to their success in your course that you are not aware of.
- **Conduct a values affirmation exercise before exams.** Allowing students to list and reflect upon what matters most to them before they take an exam has been shown to increase sense of belonging, reduce stereotype threat, and reduce achievement gaps on the assessment.

Addy, TM; Dube, D; Mitchell, KA; and SoRelle ME. 2021. What Inclusive Instructors Do: Principles and Practices for Excellence in College Teaching. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.