

## **Inclusive Teaching: Strategies that Engage Every Student**

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### **The Challenges:**

When we do not use inclusive teaching practices, members of marginalized or underrepresented groups are at increased risk of diminished participation, decreased retention of new knowledge, delayed acquisition of important skills, lower test scores, and alienation from the class or college. These consequences in turn increase the likelihood that those students will drop the course or leave the department, college, or institution.

When we do not use active learning approaches, students are less likely to retain information; less likely to apply their knowledge; less likely to gain crucial skills of communication, collaboration; and explanation—and are more likely to memorize rather than think about course material; and more likely discover misunderstandings *after* lecture rather than during lecture. These consequences also increase the likelihood that students will drop the course or leave the department, college, or institution.

### **Two Facts:**

(1) Students are unique individuals.

(2) Students are members of groups.

### **Terms:**

Bias/Prejudice: Attribution of a quality to an individual based on their membership in a group.

Explicit Prejudice: When such prejudice is intentional, conscious, and controllable.

Implicit Bias: When bias occurs due to unconscious negative associations. (Even people who want to be fair, unprejudiced, and unbiased may do the opposite due to implicit bias.)

Stereotype Threat: When members of a stigmatized group underperform due to a concern that poor performance will confirm a stereotype. (Steele & Aronson, 1995)

### **Inclusive Teaching Practices that Can Help Meet the Challenge:**

#### 1. PRACTICES THAT REDUCE STEREOTYPE THREAT

- Challenge with high standards and expectations of success (do not demean with remediation).
- Combine constructive criticism with encouragement about students' abilities and potential, together with feedback that offers specific strategies for improvement
- Emphasize malleability of intelligence and ability (rather than aptitude or talent).
- Use teaching approaches that promote active learning and encourage collaborative group work.
- Create opportunities for students to connect their values and purposes to course content.
- Use inclusionary language and diverse examples.

#### 2. PRACTICES THAT REDUCE IMPLICIT BIAS

- Ask yourself what assumptions you have about student groups and reflect on how those assumptions might be influencing your interactions with students.

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- Learn how the backgrounds and experiences of your students may influence their motivation, engagement, and learning in your classroom.
- Follow Universal Design principles in your teaching.

### 3. PRACTICES THAT REDUCE MICROAGGRESSIONS IN THE CLASSROOM

- Do not expect students to be experts on any experiences beyond their own. Do not make them speak as a representative of a group to which they belong or to which you think they belong.
- Do not assume that a group you are talking about is not in the classroom.
- Be intentional about which students you look at during discussions—where your eyes land may shape student perception of your intentions.
- Intervene when students show microaggressions toward other students. If the behavior and impact are clear, name them. (“I noticed a look of concern on several students’ faces when you made that comment.” Or “That way of putting things concerns me for the following reasons...”) If not, show curiosity and seek to learn more about what happened and its impact.

### 4. PRACTICES THAT BROADEN AND INCREASE PARTICIPATION

*Connect.* Knowing your students can help you present new knowledge in ways that more students can connect to, thereby increasing their ability to integrate knowledge meaningfully.

- Share information about who you are (both as an individual and as a member of various groups) and your path to becoming a professional in your field.
- Invite students to share their reasons for being in the class and, later, how they’re doing in the class. Follow up with questions about purpose, performance, and motivation.
- Arrive early for class and stay a bit late to chat with students and address any questions they may have.
- Treat all student questions and contributions with respect.
- Ask students questions that connect their experiences to course content.
- Conduct a mid-semester evaluation that includes a question asking, at a minimum, these two questions:
  1. If there are specific things I or your classmates do that are *helping you learn* in this class, name one or two of those things here.
  2. If there are specific things I or your classmates do that are *making it harder for you to learn* in this class, name one or two of those things here.

*Use Teaching Approaches that Promote Active Learning.* When students have an opportunity to engage deeply with course material, alone or in groups, and connect the subject matter to existing knowledge and values, they are more likely to experience success in your class. Plan multiple moments during each class in which the focus is less on content and more on what students do with that content. ‘Doing’ here means solving problems; committing tentatively to solutions; critically evaluating solutions (their own and others’); communicating, analyzing, and revising ideas; applying and testing ideas; connecting to and caring about their subjects.