

INCLUSIVE TEACHING RESOURCE

5 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO MAKE YOUR CLASSROOM MORE INCLUSIVE

This resource is part of the **Inclusive Teaching Toolkit** which is designed to assist faculty in understanding the concepts of inclusive teaching and incorporating these ideas into your classroom. This toolkit is part of the [GWSPH DEI Initiative](#) that is being developed to respond to a societal call for social justice by changing the way GWSPH works to integrate DEI into every sphere of our work. This initiative encompasses Academics, Research, Practice, and Operations. The **Inclusive Teaching Toolkit** is one of many aspects of the Academic branch of the initiative

1. **Connect with your students so they feel part of the class and develop a relationship with you.**
Here are several steps you can take to make a connection:
 - a. Learn their names (and make sure you pronounce them correctly). Don't let fear of not learning everyone's name stop you from learning anyone's name.
 - b. Make eye contact.
 - c. Send a getting-to-know you questionnaire before class asking them about themselves, any concerns they have, any special interests they have etc. This is a good opportunity to ask about preferred pronouns and names in a private setting.
 - d. Send an email to students early on – whether it is an individualized or a mass email, check in with the students and let them know you are available and/or have noticed their participation, struggles, etc.
 - e. Share something personal about yourself from time-to-time.
 - f. Acknowledge difficult times – life outside of the classroom affects participation in the classroom.
 - g. Review the [Foster an Inclusive Classroom Checklist](#) for additional ideas.

2. **Promote participation for all students.** Some students are less comfortable speaking in a group or need time to formulate their thoughts. If proactive steps are not taken to alter the natural dynamic, class will be dominated by students with more confidence speaking in groups. There are different ways to provide ways for these students to participate in class:
 - a. Use wait time. After you ask a question, give students time to think about the answer before calling on someone. Silence is ok.
 - b. Don't forget the think time in Think/Pair/Share. In a think/pair/share exercise, students have time to think about a prompt, pair with a classmate to discuss the prompt, then share thoughts with the class. Make sure you do not skip or give too short of a time to allow students to think.
 - c. Allow students to respond anonymously through polling or notecard responses.

- d. Use structure with your breakout groups so one or two individuals do not dominate the conversation and report back to the class.
 - i. Be clear about the breakout objectives and tasks.
 - ii. Give instructions on paper/screen, not just orally, to accommodate different learners.
 - iii. Assign and rotate roles (facilitator, reporter, notetaker etc.)
 - iv. Set rules for breakouts (laptops allowed? Introduce themselves? Take turns?)
 - v. Consider using a shared document as a way for the professor or the entire class to see the group discussion/participation during the breakout
 - e. Professors should make sure there is room for students to talk even if the professor's time is shortened.
3. **Include inclusive course design strategies.** There are a variety of ways to add structure to your course to promote an inclusive classroom.
- a. Use multiple lower-stakes assessments instead of 1 or 2 major assessments. Multiple lower-stakes assessments allow the professor and student to identify struggles early as well as provide many opportunities to perform well overall. If there is a mid-term worth 50%, for example, students who do not perform well on that test may not continue making an effort to learn the material and even if they do, may not be rewarded for their efforts in their class grade.
 - b. Use varied assessments. Students will succeed in different assessment formats, so providing different types of assessments will provide opportunities for everyone to succeed.
 - c. Assess students before and after class. Again, lower-stakes **required** assessments will help professors and students learn who is struggling before a student gets lost or frustrated. Examples include knowledge checks after lectures or readings, polls at the end of class, or asking students to identify main points from a class.
 - d. Provide Typical Test Questions before a test. This allows students to understand the type and rigor of questions that they will see on an exam.
 - e. Provide a session outline/notes to help students follow along with the main points in class. This also provides an example of organized notetaking for students.
 - f. Set clear course expectations in class and in writing (syllabus or other formats). For example:
 - i. Daily class objectives
 - ii. Assignment prompts and deadlines.
 - iii. Use and explain grading rubrics so students know how they will be assessed and what success looks like.
 - iv. Make sure test questions align with course objectives/content
4. **Assess your efforts.** You will not know if you are succeeding without reviewing your efforts. You can do a mid-semester evaluation, have a peer observe your class, and collect data. Ask your students, what have I done to show that I care for your learning?

5. **Promote a growth mindset.**^{1,2,3} While it may not be possible for one professor to reverse a lifetime of personal or academic circumstances that result in some students having a fixed mindset, there are steps you can take to promote a growth mindset in all of your students. You may find this infographic useful: <http://mindsetscholarsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Teacher-Practice-Infographic.pdf>
- a. Base your belief in science. Acknowledge that some students might not feel like they can succeed in X (e.g., math, writing, statistical program), but science shows us that the brain is a muscle that gets stronger when you challenge it. Growth takes effort, strategies, and advice.
 - b. Tell the students of a time that you felt you didn't belong/weren't good enough.
 - c. Instead of praising ability, praise process.
 - i. Don't say: Great job, you are smart at this/Do say: Great job, you must have worked hard on this.
 - ii. Don't say: You got it, I told you you were smart/ Do say: I liked the way you used different strategies until you figured it out.

Sources:

1. Sathy, V. & Hogan, K. (2019 July). How to make your teaching more inclusive. The Chronicle of Higher Education. Available at https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-to-make-your-teaching-more-inclusive/?cid=gen_sign_in&cid2=gen_login_refresh
2. Mindset Scholars Network. Growth mindset. Available at <https://mindsetscholarsnetwork.org/learning-mindsets/growth-mindset/>
3. Romero, C. (2015, July). What we know about a growth mindset from scientific research. Mindset Scholars Network. Available at <http://mindsetscholarsnetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/What-We-Know-About-Growth-Mindset.pdf>