Inclusion & Collaboration in the Classroom

STEP ONE: Reflecting on your students & your course

A. **People:** Who will most likely be in your class? (Consider student characteristics such as race and ethnicity, gender, class, ability, religion, language, geographic region, sexual orientation, ability/disability, first generation college, other invisible status, etc.)

B. **Goals:** What are your learning goals for the course? Are these communicated clearly to the students? Is it clear how readings and assignments relate to those goals? Can you include opportunities for students to see their own progress toward the goals?

C. **Content:** What different perspectives and viewpoints are included in the course content?

D. **Relevance:** What ways are there to connect the course topic and content to your students and the real world?

E. **Pedagogy:** What are the pedagogical choices available to you in your discipline and how diverse are they? (Examples: lecture, team-based learning, problem-based learning, socratic method, simulations, role-play, debate, service learning)

F. **Values:** What values do you intend to instill in this course? (Examples: Inquiry, community, discipline, deliberation, critical thinking, value of difference)

G. **Climate:** How will differences of positionality/opinion/thinking be handled in the classroom? How can you create safe spaces for both visible and invisible minority students? Who is missing?

STEP TWO: Reflecting on the "Hidden Curriculum"

A. **Implicit rules:** What formal and informal rules, assumptions, values are important for the course but not stated in the syllabus?

B. **Implicit messages:** What unwritten messages does the syllabus convey about the course, content, and learning? Is there a "hidden curriculum" embedded in the syllabus?

C. **Hidden biases:** In which ways does the "hidden curriculum" potentially discriminate against some students? (For example, do you use only one type of assessment to determines grades, and does the disadvantage some of the students in ways unrelated to their learning?)

D. **Teaching philosophy:** What is your teaching philosophy (student-centered learning, teacher-centered information dissemination, cooperative learning, etc.) and how does the syllabus communicate it to students? Do you clearly communicate your teaching philosophy to avoid biases?

STEP THREE: Inventory

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

✓ = I use this in my teaching

~ = I sort of use this in my teaching

X = I do not use this in my teaching

☆ = I would like to try this, though I might need more information or resources

Content

- Choose readings that deliberately reflect the diversity of contributors to the field.
- Use visuals that do not reinforce stereotypes but do include diverse people or perspectives.
- Use diverse examples to illustrate concepts, drawing upon a range of domains of information. Avoid references that are likely to be unfamiliar to some students based on their backgrounds (e.g., citing American pop culture from 'when you were in high school' in a class with many international students).
- Emphasize the range of identities and backgrounds of experts who have contributed to a given field.
- Use varied names and socio-cultural contexts in test questions, assignments, and case studies.
- Teach the conflicts of the field to incorporate diverse perspectives.
- 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.
- Analyze the content of your examples, analogies, and humor; too narrow a perspective may alienate students with different views or background knowledge.
- Include authors' full names, not just initials, in citations. (This can help emphasize gender diversity or unsettle assumptions about authorship).

Instructional Practices

- Make learning outcomes for the particular course explicit, preferably on the syllabus, and help students connect each assignment or activity to the overall point of the course
- 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).
- Invite students to identify examples that illustrate course concepts.
- Use a variety of teaching methods and modalities (verbal, visual, interactive,

didactic, etc.) rather than relying on one mode of engagement.

- Avoid giving verbal instructions without a written corollary (Multiple modes can be helpful to students with processing disabilities as well as non-native English speakers.)
- 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).
- Use a pace that lets students take notes during lecture.
- Allow ample time for any in-class activities 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).
- Vary assignments so students have a variety of ways to show what they know.
- Use a variety of formative assessments (assignments) that provide students with immediate feedback and opportunities to improve.
- Clearly communicate the expectations and grading scheme for each assignment.
- Consider ways to reward divergent, creative thinking; avoid assessments that require students to conform to one common norm.
- Help students understand how the grade relates to the intended learning outcomes of the course. Rethink any assignments that measure extraneous knowledge and skills.
- Dedicate time in class for students to discuss and ask questions about assignments or assignment expectations.
- Emphasize the larger purpose or value of the material you are studying.
- Carefully frame objectives when raising potentially sensitive or uncomfortable topics.
- Structure discussions to include a range of voices: e.g., take a queue, ask to hear from those who have not spoken, wait until several hands are raised to call on anyone, use think-pair-share activities.
- Use brief in-class writing activities to get feedback on what students are learning and thinking.
- Incorporate flexibility in the course design to modify and adjust to meet the learning opportunities that arise in the course
- Consider methods to ensure the pace of the course content allows for multiple processing speeds
- Ensure that the course material is accessible to all students, including those with disabilities (For example, do visual media have subtitles, can online readings be recognized by screen readers, etc.)
- Use anonymous grading methods, when appropriate.

- Consider alternative methods of grading, such as spec grading, contract grading, self-assessment to get students to take responsibility for their own learning.

Instructor-Student Interactions

- Use an inviting, friendly, and supportive tone in the syllabus, rather than a list of rules or prohibitions in your syllabus.
- Learn and use students' names -- what they choose to be called and how they pronounce it.
- Clarify how you want students to address you, especially if you teach students from a range of educational and cultural backgrounds.
- Distribute a student background questionnaire early in the term to learn about students' experience with the course topics, educational background, professional ambitions, general interests, etc.
- Consider ways to collaborate with students on reading selection, course design, and assessment practices
- Encourage students to visit office hours, and use that time to ask about their experiences with course topics as well as their interests outside the class.
- 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.
- Seek multiple answers or perspectives to questions.
- Avoid making generalizations about student experiences.
- Avoid making jokes at students' expense.
- Refrain from asking individual students to speak for a social identity group.
- Communicate concern for students' well-being, and share information about campus resources (e.g., Counseling & Psychological Services, Sexual Assault Prevention & Awareness Center, Services for Students with Disabilities).
- Communicate in writing and person 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.
- Model productive disagreement, showing how to critique a statement or idea rather than the speaker.
- Elicit formative feedback from students about their learning experiences in the course (e.g. facilitated Mid-Semester Feedback session or survey).
- Ask a trusted colleague or CRLT consultant to observe your class and collect data about how you include or interact with different students.

Student-Student Interactions

- Encourage students to learn and use one another's names.
- Use icebreakers regularly so students can learn about one another.
- Establish guidelines, ground rules, or community agreements for class

participation.

- o In class, have students work in pairs, triads, or small groups.
- o Have students write and share about how their background can contribute to a particular class activity.
- o For long-term teams, structure in check-ins and opportunities for peer feedback about group process.
- o On the syllabus, identify collaboration or perspective-taking as skills students will build in the course.
- o In class, explain the value of collaboration for learning. Speak of students' diverse perspectives as an asset.
- o Provide students opportunities to reflect on what they learned through collaborative activities (formal or informal).
- o Deliberately assign students to small, heterogeneous groups that do not isolate underrepresented students.
- o Have students complete a self-assessment inventory and discuss with peers.
- o Set up study groups that deliberately group students with different strengths.
- o Have students complete low-stakes small group activities that help them see and value the contributions of others.
- o Establish ways for students to intervene if they feel a certain perspective is being undervalued or not acknowledged.
- o Stop or intervene in a discussion if comments become disparaging or devalue other students' experiences.

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Materials adapted from:
Inclusion By Design: Survey Your Syllabus and Course Design
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Inclusive Teaching Strategies: Reflecting on Your Practice
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