Northwestern Principles of Inclusive Teaching

Northwestern | OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

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Mission and statements

"Northwestern is committed to excellent teaching, innovative research, and the personal and intellectual growth of its students in a diverse academic community."

Northwestern University Mission

Fostering and maintaining inclusive learning environments are at the core of Northwestern University's mission and are essential to enabling full participation, engagement, and learning for all students. Creating an inclusive learning environment necessitates an awareness and knowledge of teaching practices and pedagogies that consider our own and our students' diverse backgrounds, identities, and lived experiences. It requires intentionality on the part of instructors to examine their teaching and adopt changes to their curriculum, course design, and modality of instruction to create equitable learning experiences.

As we work to cultivate classroom and learning environments of inclusiveness, I encourage all instructors to engage with *Northwestern Principles of Inclusive Teaching.* Doing so will involve ongoing learning and adaptation as instructors apply the ideas to their classrooms, their disciplines, and their ongoing interactions with students. This resource does not stand alone in our efforts to promote inclusion within our community and should be used in concert with educational development workshops and other tools available to instructors, departments, units, and schools. Together, they support our efforts to elevate the academic experience for Northwestern students in significant ways.

I thank the members of the Office of the Associate Provost for Faculty, the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching, the Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion, and the Office of Equity for leading this initiative. I also would like to extend thanks to two former colleagues whose contributions to *Northwestern Principles of Inclusive Teaching* were invaluable: Sekile Nzinga, former interim chief diversity officer and director of the Women's Center, and Omari Keeles, former assistant director for diversity and inclusion at the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching. This collaboration on Northwestern's initiative to advance inclusive teaching has produced what is certain to be a truly impactful resource.

Kathleen Hagerty
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Pedagogy—teaching and learning—is higher education's superpower. It is what we do best. Pedagogy is one of the most effective strategies to affecting societal change as we center more ideas and ideologies, more research and evidence, and more experiences and histories as part of our intellectual growth. Pedagogy is also iterative. It is informed by our research, and it is informed by our students. *Northwestern Principles of Inclusive Teaching* provides principles to help faculty at all levels of experience think anew about their approach to teaching. It distills principles based on pedagogical research and epistemological grounding in inclusivity. It challenges us to rethink our own suppositions as part of a discipline and rigor of thought and does so reminding us how much we care about inquiry, our research, and our students. It also reminds us that we are always learners ourselves.

In developing these materials, we have staked a claim that inclusive pedagogies—strategies that invite more people into a learning experience in an accessible and respectful way—are one of this University's best practices. The principles laid out in here show us how to foster learning and engagement in and out of the classroom while creating a space in which people of all backgrounds can bring to, and take away, a teaching and learning experience that is as inclusive as it is effective.

This resource is about each of us at Northwestern University. Its guidance certainly applies to classroom instruction but could, too, be extrapolated to the ways in which we engage one another in learning and dialogue across a number of other experiences. I invite you and your colleagues to consider how these principles may be effectively applied to reframe our educational mission in a world that continues to witness radical change.

I am so proud that Northwestern continues to affirm its principles of diversity and inclusion while helping each of us to do the same.

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Introduction

Institutions of higher education are often lauded as bastions of liberal thoughts and ideas, as welcoming to people from all backgrounds, and as open to the diverse perspectives, experiences, and worldviews those people bring to the educational context. However, an observation of the national current higher education landscape —ranging from course curriculum to the demographics of the faculty and administration—shows a different reality. Colleges and universities in the United States are grappling with issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) at all levels. For example, although the number of students from traditionally underrepresented groups in US colleges and universities increased over the last few decades, many students report not feeling a sense of belonging to, or inclusion in, the cultural milieu of their universities. Reasons for feeling a lack of connectedness to the university context include, but are not limited to, not seeing members of students' own identity groups well represented on the faculty and stigmatizing events and experiences in the classroom. Northwestern University has responded to these concerns by investing in the development of DEI initiatives that affect the student experience; central among these is assisting faculty in developing inclusive teaching practices.

Inclusive teaching refers to pedagogy that strives to serve the needs of all students, regardless of their backgrounds or identities, and to support their engagement with subject material. This may include strategies such as using course material and pedagogies that consider and acknowledge the various precollege backgrounds and contexts of students as well as requiring instructors to think about their own identities with respect to the content they teach. In addition, inclusive teaching means creating a space where all voices are included in a discussion of the readings. In a classroom setting, the instructor can create an inclusive environment by being open to novel ideas as well as receptive and responsive to student feedback. Inclusive teaching also requires attention to how students influence the learning environment as the instructor considers, for instance, opportunities for collaboration and how students form study groups.

Decades of research have provided evidence on the positive impact that inclusive teaching has on student achievement. For example, Keller and Lyndgaard reported that what happens with and between professors and students in the classroom (i.e., interpersonal communication and relationships) remains a critical element of year-to-year persistence and degree completion.[1] Additionally, Gannon contended that students are more likely to be successful through activities that support their learning abilities and backgrounds.[2] Zumbrunn and colleagues noted that students' perception of the climate of the learning environment is positively correlated with learning outcomes.[3] In other words, the more positive the classroom climate is perceived by students, the better they perform on a number of academic achievement metrics.

The sociodemographic backgrounds of students entering colleges and universities are shifting, and institutions of higher education must be prepared for this change. Ensuring that students feel included in the classroom and have equitable learning experiences are priorities at Northwestern University, and in fact part of its mission. Although creating an inclusive learning environment is important to most instructors, many find it to be challenging and often grapple with how to adapt and adjust their practices to meet this goal. As such, *Northwestern Principles of Inclusive Teaching* was developed to assist instructors at all levels—those from all cultural backgrounds and social identity groups, those who are new to the professoriate as well as those more senior—in their teaching and in fostering inclusive learning environments.

How to use this resource

Northwestern Principles of Inclusive Teaching is organized around eight principles of inclusive learning and teaching. For each principle, we explain the theoretical framework and describe its impact on learning. We provide broad strategies that instructors can use to implement the principles in their course preparation and teaching and an example of how an instructor has applied the principle in class. We also list further readings for those who are interested in learning more (in addition to a comprehensive bibliography at the end).

Inclusive teaching requires continuous learning and adaptation on the part of the instructor. This resource can be used in many ways to facilitate that learning. You may find it useful to read the entire guide and choose several promising strategies from different principles to begin implementing in your courses as a first step. You may prefer to work through the document more slowly, reading and applying one principle before moving to the next. Either way, we encourage you to return to *Northwestern Principles of Inclusive Teaching* each time you prepare your syllabi for an upcoming term, adopting a new strategy or focusing more deeply on one principle each term.

Prioritizing which principles and strategies to implement first may depend on whether you teach in STEM or humanities fields, large lectures or small seminars, in person or online. Instructors are not expected to read the guide and then be able implement all of the strategies suggested.

You may want to work with a small group of peer faculty or your department to discuss and implement these principles, assessing and providing feedback to one another. We hope that this resource will also inspire faculty who mentor students to consider how these principles might apply to the mentoring relationship.

The strategies presented will resonate with instructors differently according to not only their disciplines or course modality but also their social identities, such as race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Nonetheless, this resource is intended for *all* instructors. By collectively engaging with the principles, we are ensuring that we are taking the necessary steps to foster a more equitable and inclusive experience for all Northwestern students.

Consider your and your students' social identities and their implications for learning

"Even though I come into the classroom as a professional teacher, I do not leave my social identities at the door. I need to monitor the gaps in my knowledge and sensitivity, areas in which I still have ignorance, fear, and uncertainty." – "Jerry" [4]

The demographic makeup of US college students is shifting, with a noticeable increase in students who identify as Black or Indigenous or as people of color (BIPOC). At Northwestern, for example, from the class of 2013 to the class of 2024, the proportion of Black students grew from 6 to 10 percent; and of Hispanic/Latinx students from 7 to 16 percent. In addition, the proportion of first-generation students increased from 9 to 13 percent; and Pell Grant–eligible students from 12 to 21 percent. These changing student demographics are a critical focal point for educators as they engage in new and innovative ways to teach.

Adapting to new realizations and expectations can be difficult for instructors, particularly if they are asked to modify their teaching techniques and classroom material to be more inclusive. It is even more difficult when the instructors have been taught, overtly and covertly, that the traditional westernized method of teaching is the best one. Weinstein and Obear contend that "expectations are increasing for instructors not only to be sensitive to issues of gender, race, ethnicity, and multiculturalism, regardless of their academic specialization, but also to treat these issues as part of their teaching responsibilities."[5]

Social identity refers to those aspects of people's self-concept that derive from the social categories or groups (e.g., gender, race, ability, social class) to which they perceive they belong, with the value and emotional significance attached to those categories or group memberships.[6] Social identities and the responses they evoke can affect student learning.[7] For example, the existence of a negative stereotype about a group with which one identifies can result in a negative performance on a given task (e.g., an exam). This phenomenon is referred to as stereotype threat and is often reported by students who identify with marginalized and minoritized groups in educational contexts.[8] Studies of stereotype threat in learning environments highlight the need for instructors to understand how beliefs and behavior can be interpreted and how they can influence the learning experience of all students.

It is essential that instructors educate themselves about students from different social groups. To change the classroom environment, all members of the university community must engage in understanding differences and accepting their own roles in the present campus culture. The knowledge of how identity develops for students can help further the understanding needed to help them all succeed. The knowledge of how identity is cultivated by environment can help develop successful teaching strategies for all students.

Based on the idea that people must recognize their own culture before truly understanding another person's culture, instructors must also reflect on their own identities.[9] Instructors are not blank slates when they enter a classroom. They have inevitably acquired biases and opinions that affect their teaching.[10] As educators, we can have unconscious feelings toward particular students related to their identities, and "these powerful, emotional reactions to a student signal an internal conflict and a need to consider whether the problem lies in the student or in yourself."[11] Unintentional prejudice occurs when society's unwritten rules about status, respect, and worth are perpetuated by even the most egalitarian educators. Instructors should continually work to address their biases and other prejudicial behaviors that can have a negative impact on student learning.

To contribute to the development and success of all students, educators must be aware of their own multiple social identities and how their corresponding lived experiences tied to those identities have implications for their teaching. By failing to acknowledge the influence of social identity and background on their pedagogy and teaching practices, instructors may unknowingly perpetuate inequities in the learning environment.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

1. **Instructors should engage in work around their personal racial, ethnic, and multicultural identity development** to increase their awareness of privilege, oppression, and racial consciousness. Those in positions of power and privilege can examine how their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors may unintentionally perpetuate prejudice, discrimination, and bias in the classroom. For example, those who identify as White can learn the different ways they may unintentionally perpetuate microaggressions toward their racially/ethnically minoritized students and in turn take the necessary steps to mitigate this form of subtle racism. Instructors should engage in this ongoing work by seeking educational development workshops and other resources such as literature on social identity, equity and inclusion, and antiracism.

2. **Instructors should reflect on how their identities impact their teaching.** We all have salient identities that grant us membership into groups characterized by race, gender, class, nationality, ability, and other sociocultural distinctions. These group memberships create the lens through which we see and experience differences among members of other groups. Our beliefs, assumptions, values, and attitudes show up in the ideation of course content, student expectations, engagement, and ascriptions of intelligence (both positive and negative). Do stereotypes about race, gender, or another identity affect who you call on most frequently, for example? Do you hold all students to the same high standards for expected achievement?

EXAMPLE

Before the start of each academic term, instructors may engage in one or more activities that require them to reflect on their different social identities. For example, a queer, Latinx woman who teaches in a STEM department may consider which identities are salient to her as she develops her course content and modality of teaching as well as how the many identities she holds may impact her interpersonal communication and relationships with her students. She may also ask herself whether her identities relate to any preconceived notions she has about teaching courses where it is likely that the majority of students will be White men? A tool that may be useful in her reflective process is the [Social Identity Wheel](#). By engaging in the Social Identity Wheel activity, she may become more cognizant of how different identities may impact the way she sees her students as well as how her students may perceive and treat her.

FURTHER READING

Barnett, P. E. (2020, December 24). Unpacking teachers' invisible knapsacks: Social identity and privilege in higher education. https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/unpacking-teachers-invisible-knapsacks-social-identity-and

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Torres, V., Howard-Hamilton, M. F., & Cooper, D. L. (2011). Identity development of diverse populations: Implications for teaching and administration in higher education: ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report (Vol. 12). John Wiley & Sons.

Wilkins, S., Butt, M. M., Kratochvil, D., & Balakrishnan, M. S. (2016). The effects of social identification and organizational identification on student commitment, achievement and satisfaction in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 41*(12), 2232–2252.

Establish and communicate clear course standards and expectations

"I don't know what I'm supposed to do!" "Why do we need to learn this?" These types of student laments can be very frustrating for instructors to hear and to acknowledge. At the same time, such statements underscore why it is critical for instructors to establish and communicate clear course standards and expectations to their students at the outset of and throughout the term.

COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS AROUND COURSEWORK

Certainly, students need to understand what is expected of them in order to thrive and succeed. As Collier and Morgan have suggested, "students' success in college depends not only upon their explicit understanding of course content but also their implicit understanding of how to demonstrate that knowledge in ways that will satisfy each professor's expectations. Hence even when two students have an equivalent mastery of the explicit content of their coursework, the one who has a better understanding of their professors' implicit expectations will be more likely to succeed."[12] However, faculty expectations about coursework and students' understanding of those expectations are not always aligned.[13] Students who did not encounter similar expectations of how to demonstrate their knowledge in past educational settings may require instructors to clearly state their expectations.

This disconnect between faculty and student expectations, and the impact of that disconnect on students' success, can be explained by the "hidden curriculum" present within every course. The hidden curriculum, a term first coined in the 1970s in response to the broad and unmitigated structural racial, gender, and social inequities in education, refers to the difference between the curriculum as designed and the curriculum in action.[14] Sambell and McDowell define the construct as "what is implicit and embedded in educational experiences in contrast with the formal statements about curricula and the surface features of educational interaction."[15] The hidden curriculum can present disproportionate barriers to some students due to their lived experiences and educational backgrounds. However, the hidden curriculum can be mitigated, Semper and Blasco argue, when instructors acknowledge their assumptions and reflect on how their own lived experiences and knowledge might inform their curricula and how there may be differences between their stated and assumed expectations.[16]

I was premed and it was just jarring being in those classrooms. I did science pretty well in high school, so it's just like a shock: the expectations, knowing how to study for it, knowing what was expected of me. The shock of being one of the few people of color in a large room. It was all of that.

(Senior Focus Group, Northwestern Black Student Experience Report)

Establishing and communicating expectations for students is essential. The first step is to align those expectations with thoughtful course goals, learning objectives, teaching methods, and assessments.[17] As they think through their curricular, pedagogical, and teaching choices, instructors should reflect critically on their rationale for each and make that rationale transparent to their students.[18] Even the most experienced instructors should probe their own thinking: "Why do I give two exams and assign a final paper?" If the answers are like these—"Because that's what I did as an undergraduate" or "That's what everyone else does in my department"—then instructors should probably rethink how the activity fits, or does not fit, with their learning objectives. Working through the rationale will make it easier to explain choices and decisions to students and therefore help lessen the impact of the hidden curriculum. It will also signal to students the value and purpose of different activities and tasks, which may not have been transparent to the student otherwise. Instructors should communicate these expectations on syllabi as well as through additional methods, such as rubrics for assignments and oral instructions in class, and should not assume prior understanding.

COMMUNICATING EXPECTATIONS AROUND CLASSROOM INTERACTIONS

Crafting communal guidelines or ground rules with students can help them develop a shared understanding about how to communicate with one another in both large- and small-group settings. Being transparent about why these guidelines matter is important as well. Inviting students to discuss the qualities and behaviors that will create a respectful, inclusive, and engaging learning environment, even in a class that is not discussion based, will do much to foster "purposeful and substantive interactions among students."[19] Statements about respectful communication can also be included on the syllabus and in handouts related to specific assignments. These statements and ground rules make expectations for classroom interactions explicit to all students regardless of past experience.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

1. **Reflect critically on what you want your students to be able to do, know, and value** by the end of the course and explain why this matters. Explicitly identify relevant skills, behaviors, and attitudes on syllabi and in class. Explain the rationale and purpose behind teaching activities and assignments. Communicate what course content has been included and why.

2. **Examine the syllabus for what may be getting communicated to students.** What is the tone of the syllabus and does it match your tone in class? Does the syllabus come across as authoritarian and rigid? Easygoing and flexible? Friendly and approachable? For some students, there can also be confusion between the instructor's words in class and what is stated in the syllabus.

3. **Avoid assumptions about students' prior understanding, in terms of both foundational knowledge and tasks.** Asking students to write a literature review, for example, might look very different in different fields. Offer clarifying details or examples.

4. **Create communal guidelines on the first day of class.** Ask your students, in small groups or pairs, how you should interact with one another and how you can create a respectful and inclusive learning environment. Add these guidelines to the syllabus or course website and reinforce them.

5. **Communicate expectations about what it means to participate in discussion**, whether in small or large groups or in face-to-face or online environments, especially if there is a grade attached to participation. Explain how you assess participation, including, for example, expectations about quality, frequency, and length.

6. **Clarify assessment criteria.** How exactly will students' work be assessed? Each assignment should have criteria (ideally with accompanying rubrics) provided to students ahead of time. Formative feedback should be timely, clear, and constructive and focus on the students' work.

7. **Communicate a balance of rigor and empathy in both words and actions**—students should be held to high but achievable standards.

EXAMPLE

On the first day of class, the instructor tells her students, "This is not going to be a course where I just give you information and you write down what I say. In this class, we are going to engage in activities, both individually and in small groups, that will help you develop your critical thinking, cultivate empathy and perspective, and collaborate effectively in teams. At the end of the term, you will have completed three projects that deliberately build on each other, each focusing on a core concept we are discussing in this class, and which will help achieve the learning objectives." After she communicates key aspects and themes of the course, providing her rationale for selecting different texts and materials, she then breaks the students into small groups to get to know one another and to develop ground rules for working in teams and full-class discussion. The full class reconvenes to cocreate expectations. To put these ground rules into immediate practice, she forms triads in which students review the syllabus, noting any questions or points of confusion they might have about assignments, course policies, or how to engage with the instructor and the TAs.

FURTHER READING

Lee, A., Poch, R., Shaw, M., & Williams, R. (2012). *Engaging diversity in undergraduate classrooms: A pedagogy for developing intercultural competence.* John Wiley & Sons.

Semper, J. V. O., & Blasco, M. (2018). Revealing the hidden curriculum in higher education. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 37*(5), 481–498.

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design* (2nd ed.). Prentice-Hall.

Offer varied ways for students to demonstrate their learning and knowledge

"How do my students approach learning?" "How do I know that they have learned?"

For many instructors, the answers to these questions seem simple. Instructors may assume, for example, that students should learn and study as they once did to be successful. Or they may assume that all students learn in essentially the same fashion and, as such, all students should be asked to demonstrate their learning and knowledge in uniform ways. However, such assumptions do not recognize that students enter our classrooms and learning environments with a diverse range of prior experiences, knowledge, skills, and beliefs, all of which frame how they approach learning, studying, and thinking. Such assumptions may also reinforce dominant narratives about how learning *should* be expressed and assessed, which, in turn, may reinforce activities and assessments that tend to benefit or privilege certain students over others. An inclusive learning environment will offer students varied opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in ways that are aligned with their strengths and that resonate with their experiences and backgrounds.

ASSET-BASED PEDAGOGY

One productive approach is for instructors to utilize asset-based pedagogy, which centers the views that students' culture is a strength and that disparities in achievement do not arise from deficiencies in that culture. Asset-based approaches to learning and teaching build on constructivist notions of learning, by asking students to apply prior knowledge, experiences, and beliefs to new contexts, in ways that specifically validate cultural knowledge.[20] Asset-based pedagogy also recognizes and honors different approaches to *doing*, recognizing that there may be many different ways to address issues, answer questions, and solve problems.[21] Using this approach can be a means to elicit positive learning outcomes and mitigate stereotype threat (when the existence of a negative stereotype about a group with which one identifies can result in negative performance) and impostor syndrome (the feeling of not being competent

enough or of not belonging). As Johnson recommends, instructors should "emphasize that differences in assets among students inherently provide different pathways to success, and that they should, therefore, expect that members of the class will achieve success in different ways."[22] Instructors can implement this approach, for example, by offering students a variety of ways to demonstrate their mastery of content, such as completing a written assignment, a creative work, or a class presentation.

MOTIVATION TO LEARN

Asset-based pedagogy can promote motivation to learn. Essentially, students are motivated to learn when they possess a sense of autonomy or control over the outcome of a given task, a sense of competence that they can complete or manage the task, a sense of relevance to the context of the task, and a sense of relatedness to the people associated with the task.[23] Providing clear expectations (principle 2) and offering varied means of demonstrating knowledge are essential building blocks for learning motivation.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

1. **Help students reflect on what they bring to a task.** Instructors might ask students to list the knowledge, skills, and experiences they bring to a given task, topic, or conversation. Prompt them to think beyond specific academic knowledge, probing what they bring in different areas, such as communication, teamwork, technical skills, organization, and creativity.

2. **Provide students with autonomy and choice.** Instructors can find ways to help students take ownership of their own learning by sharing what they know (asset-based perspective) rather than focusing on what they *do not* know (deficit-based perspective). For example, students could answer two out of three essay questions on an exam, select their own topic for a research paper, or drop the lowest grade on a set of quizzes. Students might lead a class discussion individually or in pairs, determine their own timelines

for a project, or decide how different assessments are weighted.

3. **Offer students ways to develop competence and self-efficacy.** Students can be encouraged to break large tasks into smaller, more manageable tasks. Instructors can offer smaller but more frequent low-stakes assessments that count for lower percentages of the final grade, so that students can develop and reinforce their skills; provide opportunities for immediate feedback and self-reflection; and find ways for students to immediately apply (analyze, synthesize, evaluate) ideas and concepts.

4. **Offer alternative assessments that allow students to relate more clearly to the context.** Rather than relying on traditional assessments (e.g., individual, timed exams; five-page essays), instructors might consider alternative assessments that encourage students to make personal connections to the material or their peers. Consider, for example, requiring reflective short writing in which students apply concepts or theories to their lives in addition to a traditional research paper or authentic tasks associated with the field (e.g., policy memo, team project). Student assignments might also be directed toward a variety of audiences rather than solely the instructor (e.g., blogs, websites, public performances, presentations to external clients or judges).

5. **Provide multiple opportunities and choices for informal expression.** Instructors can offer varied opportunities for informal expression, such as class discussions, laboratories, or study sections and online discussion boards, annotated readings, or project team meetings. Instructors can also offer multiple means for engagement: student to student, teaching assistant to student, and instructor to student.

6. **Ensure that the varied means of expression are accessible and equitably affirmed and highlighted.** By bringing forward both written and oral points made by students, whether in class or asynchronously online, instructors affirm the varied means of expression and the students who chose them. Highlighting a wide range validates their use and encourages students to further explore different means of demonstrating their learning.

FURTHER READING

Johnson, K. (2019). Implementing inclusive practices in an active learning STEM classroom. *Advances in Physiology Education, 43*(2), 207–210.

Lopez, F. A. (2017). Altering the trajectory of the self-fulfilling prophecy: Asset-based pedagogy and classroom dynamics. *Journal of Teacher Education, 68*(2), 193–212.

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Communicate sources of support for learning

Studies demonstrate that academic support structures can have a significant impact on student learning, performance, and feelings of academic belonging.[24] Students who participate in academic support programs typically increase their academic performance as well as their confidence. These students seek support when faced with course or academic challenges; many students also seek support to hone academic skills, such as study practices and test-taking strategies. Whether used for proactive or reactive reasons, support resources can complement students' in-class learning experiences—often helping students achieve their full academic potential.

For me, it was not really understanding the full resources that I was supposed to use. For example, I didn't really understand what office hours were, not realizing that you don't necessarily have to have a specific question. Not having family who knew about the American college system . . . put me at a disadvantage.

(Women Focus Group, Northwestern Black Student Experience Report)

Support for learning refers to academic services, programs, and resources available to students to enhance their academic experience. These supports can help students as they transition from a different learning environment (e.g., high school or previous institution) to a university. They can also help students develop critical skills to meet expectations of academic rigor and to balance daily course requirements with heftier course projects and assignments. Examples of external sources of support for learning are office hours, academic advising, academic learning and resource centers, tutoring services, libraries, and writing centers.[25] While new instructors often learn about academic support and resources on campus during their orientation, it is important that all instructors actively familiarize themselves with the resources available to students and promote sources of support.

However, as Anthony Abraham Jack describes, "not all students have had a chance to learn how to navigate mainstream institutions like colleges before they actually

enter them, and colleges should not assume that they have."[26] Indeed, academic skills and strategies vary among students. Importantly, instructors often play a key role in guiding students toward sources of support for their academic progress. As such, instructors should promote available support services within the university.

Scholars have demonstrated the importance and positive impact of instructor-student relationships on the academic success of students.[27] Instructors should recognize their role as institutional agents of support for students both inside and outside the classroom. Students greatly benefit from instructor check-ins, whereby instructors gauge students' comprehension of course materials and their assessment preparedness. As Lundberg et al. demonstrate, when students perceive instructors as "available, helpful, and sympathetic, they [report] greater gains in learning."[28] In addition to communicating course standards and expectations, instructors should communicate sources of support that students can use to meet instructors' standards and expectations. In their 2017 study on low-income, first-generation undergraduate students, Means and Pyne found that for "students struggling with challenging course styles and material, a supportive faculty member proved to be pivotal." Among other things, these faculty provided "regular outreach to students through office hours as well as other kinds of contact."[29]

An inclusive learning environment eliminates the barrier of students' having to request information about academic support. Instead, instructors actively communicate information to students in a clear and open manner. In communicating sources of support, instructors also promote student self-advocacy. While some students arrive at the university with fine-tuned support-seeking practices, other students may hesitate to seek support or may not be aware of available resources. Some students, particularly those from marginalized groups, may think that seeking help is a sign of weakness or a lack of competence that they do not want visible to instructors or their peers. It is critical that instructors normalize and promote such practices to help students build self-advocacy skills and learn that academic support can be a core element of effective learning, rather than a sign of deficit.

We should also remember that students often turn to their peers for academic support. Informal peer tutoring and study groups are great examples of student-to-student academic support and should be encouraged.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

1. **Learn about academic support and resources.** Inquire about department, school, and university resources. Familiarize yourself with the university's sources of support for learning, including your school's academic advising resources. Engage in educational opportunities (e.g., a consultation with [Academic Support and Learning Advancement](#)) to learn about student resources at Northwestern. For example, in the 2016 [Northwestern University Black Student Experience Report,](#) the library was reported to be one of the places where students felt most comfortable and experienced the lowest levels of discrimination on campus.

2. **Identify and make connections with course- and discipline-relevant resources.** From connecting with subject librarians to working with tutors in academic support programs, instructors can benefit from identifying resources that can directly support students with course projects and assignments.

3. **Include a statement in the course syllabus about external sources of academic support.** A clear and inclusive statement encouraging support-seeking practices can prompt students to take advantage of academic resources. Academic Support and Learning Advancement has a sample syllabus statement for instructors.

4. **Emphasize the purpose and importance of office hours.** On the first day of class, communicate your office hours and clearly describe their purpose. Regularly encourage students to attend office hours, whether or not they have specific questions regarding course content.

5. **Direct students to campus resources for support.** Remind students about campus resources when introducing a course assessment. For example, encourage students to take advantage of writing support for written assessments. When providing feedback to students, include resources that can help students improve their skills, practices, and strategies. Students can locate resources through the [Academic Resource Directory](#). Share examples from students who successfully utilized academic support resources.

6. **Incorporate resources in course assessments or activities.** Require that students seek support at campus resources (e.g., [the Writing Place](#)). The requirement can help students recognize the potential benefit of support resources.

7. **Invite representatives from campus resources to the classroom.** Alternatively, instructors can hold class sessions in an academic resource center (e.g., a library).

EXAMPLE

Students in a research seminar are required to complete an archival project for their final course assessment. The instructor wants students to have the support they need to learn and successfully complete this assignment, so she helps them make connections across campus to assist with their research and writing endeavors. The instructor knows how important it is for all students to know and use academic support resources on campus, and therefore includes a statement about these resources on the course syllabus. She makes clear that using these resources is standard practice for effective learning and not something only for students who need help. She also includes links to the Writing Place on the course's Canvas site and reminds students to take advantage of writing consultations offered there. In addition, she requires that students discuss their project outlines with experienced graduate students at the [History Writing Center](#). To encourage students to make connections with academic support resources, she collaborates with the librarian at McCormick Library of Special Collections and University Archives. Students attend an interactive instruction session on how to use the library's materials.

FURTHER READING

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Cultivate a welcoming and inclusive course climate

What does it look like to teach in ways that can engage and challenge all students? What does an inclusive classroom climate look like? How important is the role of an instructor's understanding of social identity and pedagogical reflection in promoting positive course climate for BIPOC students, students with disabilities, neurodiverse students, LGBTQIA+ students, and other marginalized student populations? And what is the role of course content and social context in establishing a positive course climate?

As the demographic landscape of university campuses, including Northwestern's, continues to evolve, there is a pressing need for institutions and instructors to find ways to foster inclusion and excellence with an increasingly heterogeneous classroom population. The focus of instructors must shift beyond intellectual and skill development to consider how social and emotional dimensions affect student learning. Research suggests that the best indicator of students' overall satisfaction with their institution is classroom climate.[30]

Course climate has been defined by Ambrose et al. as "the intellectual, social, emotional, and physical environments in which our students learn."[31] Course climate, fundamentally interpersonal in nature, is created through multiple interacting variables that include student-student interactions, instructor-student interactions, course demographics, course content and material, and instances of stereotyping and tokenism. An inclusive course climate is not a means to an end, nor should climate be thought of as a good versus bad binary; rather, climate should be thought about as a continuum that can be assessed and adjusted over the duration of the instruction period.

Not all courses explicitly explore identity and sociological structures; however, it is important that instructors understand how systems of oppression manifest themselves in the *how* and *what* of course content, regardless of topic. An inclusive curriculum framework moves away from explicit marginalization, where only one, often white and Western, dominant perspective is presented. Instructors should avoid implicitly centralizing one or two token perspectives in readings, lectures, and other

content in an effort to comply with requirements or to create the appearance of inclusion.[32]

Furthermore, the content of a course and the social context (i.e., immediate social or physical environment) within which it is taught interact with each other and

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I am especially dissatisfied with students who trivialize Black problems and issues. There have been a number of instances in classes where we were discussing Black culture and students would say incredibly inappropriate comments without being reprimanded.

(2016 Black Student Experience Survey, Northwestern Student Experience Report)

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permeate course climate. Research findings note, "the importance of the instructor in attending not only to subtleties of classroom climate within the physical bounds of the classroom but also to broader social contexts outside the classroom."[33] Instructors' effectively connecting diverse course content with social and institutional contexts is an indicator of an inclusive course climate.

The ideal course environment is one in which all students feel a sense of belonging and that their points of view matter.[34] To encourage pedagogy that is conducive to belonging, it is essential for instructors to move away from a teacher-centered manner of instruction to a learning-centered manner of instruction, where instructors focus on the perspectives, experiences, interests, capacities, and needs of students. Barr notes that learning-centered instruction "establishes positive instructor-student relationships, fosters student self-efficacy, and strikes a balance between being challenging and being caring."[35] Instructors establish learning-centered instruction by promoting active participation through the coconstruction of course expectations and through proactive reflection on the progress of those expectations. Instructors should commit to engaging with students in ways that do not exclude, privilege, or center any specific group, identity, or experience. Instructors should reflect on how they are presenting knowledge and

develop a practice of mindfulness that allows them to become aware of any harmful or invalidating behavior or misuse of power.[36] Ultimately, the relationship and rapport between students and instructors is the foundation upon which an inclusive course climate is built.

Intercultural pedagogy refers to a range of teaching and curricular approaches that improve students' abilities to communicate and work across cultural, social, and personal differences. Instructors should strive to cultivate a course climate that affirms the intellect of each student and fosters belonging and value of all identities, experiences, and backgrounds. In describing what she refers to as a "pedagogy of hope," hooks advocates for "bringing to the classroom pedagogical strategies that affirm [students'] presence, their right to speak, in multiple ways on diverse topics. This pedagogical strategy is rooted in the assumption that we all bring to the classroom experiential knowledge, that this knowledge can indeed enhance our learning experience."[37] Engaging and building rapport with students are important elements in cultivating an inclusive course climate. Students are not only intellectual beings but also social and emotional beings; the interactions between these dimensions influence the learning and performance of each student.

The relationships among students also have implications for each student's overall experience of course climate. Instructors who foster diversity in the classroom design substantive and relevant opportunities for students to practice and refine communication skills and explore multiple points of view in diverse contexts.[38] University settings may be the first place where some students encounter a diversity of peers. Students individually bring with them socialized and indoctrinated beliefs, assumptions, and ways of knowing, all of which influence how they engage with learning spaces. To practice effective intercultural pedagogy, instructors must encourage a positive student-to-student rapport that encourages the exploration and affirmation of identity and difference.

The aim of establishing an inclusive course climate cannot be to guarantee a "safe space," because learning spaces are not power-neutral or devoid of conflict.[39] Liberatory pedagogy seeks to name, address, and eradicate oppressive systems, which cannot be accomplished through disengagement. It is critical for instructors to model positive interactions and demonstrate supportive interpersonal behaviors, such as praising moments of growth, intervening when microaggressions arise, and sharing appropriate and applicable personal stories or experiences.[40]

TEACHING STRATEGIES

1. **Become aware of any biases or stereotypes you may unconsciously hold and treat each student as an individual.** Instructors must commit to their own self-examination, engaging in inner reflection on privilege, epistemology, and personal well-being so that they can empower and affirm each student from a place of wholeness (see principle 1).

2. **Be attentive to terminology and model inclusive language, behavior, and attitudes.** Terminology that defines and speaks to the experiences of specific sociocultural groups and identities is ever changing and evolving. Instructors must regularly seek opportunities to learn and relearn about cultures to which they do not belong and the language that can be used to show respect toward them. An example of using inclusive language is avoiding gendered phrases, such as "guys" (instead, use "folks," "everyone," "students," or "learners"), to address the class.

3. **Convey the same level of confidence in the abilities of all your students and be mindful of low-ability cues.** How instructors communicate and convey confidence in students' ability to perform academically is central to how each student experiences course climate. Students can have a sense of an instructor's attitude about their ability to perform due to the instructor's perception that they belong to a stigmatized group. Membership in a marginalized group can lead to students' underperforming due to stereotype threat, which "occurs when a student's anxieties about confirming a negative stereotype cause the student to perform poorly."[41] Instructors may inadvertently display messages rooted in bias and assumptions, for example, "I don't mind extending the deadline for you because I know students from urban schools struggle with the pace at Northwestern." Language like this, whether intentional or unintentional, diminishes students' self-efficacy.

4. **Structure opportunities for collaboration and interaction with peers.** Collaborative learning fosters intercultural competences and grounds course material in a broader social context. Instructors should explore diverse ways students can engage with one another, including collaborative project work, peer reviews, group research projects, group presentations, and facilitated dialogue and discussion.

5. **Facilitate and encourage group dialogue.** Dialogue and discussion are crucial tools for engaging in intercultural pedagogy. These methods activate experiential knowledge and allow students to practice listening, responding, and sharing their points of view. Model how to consider students' different points of view and emphasize the need for students to adopt the same behavior with their peers. Agreeing on coconstructed ground rules for discussion at the start of the term or before a dialogue is a way to mitigate anticipated conflicts (see principle 2).

6. **Turn discord and tension into a learning opportunity.** Challenging moments are to be expected as students engage in active learning, and they offer students the opportunity to be vulnerable to the process of learning and expanding their personal perceptions. To transform discord into learning opportunities, you can:

   - Use care when discussing topics that may be sensitive in nature, including a content warning before the discussion begins, and explain why the topics are applicable to course material.

   - Be aware of interpersonal displays of discomfort, and explicitly address tensions early.

7. **Avoid microaggressions.** Sue et al. define microaggressions as "brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults to the target person or group." Microaggressions rooted in race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and other sociocultural identities negatively affect students in these groups. [42] Offensive language reveals the biases and prejudices of the transgressor and severely affects the experience of the student who experiences it. Instructors should take responsibility should they harm others, even unintentionally.

   - Listen, and reflect on what you hear. Give students space to make their full point before you respond.

   - Manage your feelings of defensiveness. It is okay to feel defensive, but that feeling is yours to manage, not another person's.

   - Take responsibility for harm with such phrases as "I'm sorry that what I said hurt you" and "I'm sorry I didn't handle that better."

8. **Intervene when microaggressions arise.** Instructors should commit to intervening when students exhibit harmful behaviors. Microaggression intervention strategies recommended by Sue et al. include

   - promoting empathy and pointing out commonality

   - differentiating between intent and impact

   - asking for clarification

   - describing what you observe is happening

   - appealing to the microaggression offenders' values and principles

   - carefully and sensitively redirecting or challenging the stereotype, using language absent of shaming

9. **Examine course content while crafting an inclusive curriculum**:

   - Assign course readings and texts that are gender neutral and free of stereotypes.

   - Assign course readings and texts that include scholarship and research by and about marginalized groups.

   - Discuss the contributions of historically underrepresented groups to your field of study.

   - Share how recent scholarship about race, gender, class, sexuality, and other identities is challenging and changing your field of study.

   - Enrich course materials by bringing in guest lecturers from other universities, including faculty and staff, or off-campus professionals with diverse sociocultural experiences.

   - Use multiple and diverse examples to support literature.

"Inclusive teaching can open up students to worlds in a classroom, allowing students to grow from whatever place they started. You can tell when students feel empowered and connected with material and want to share their experiences and insights. Engaging in this way takes bravery—but is more than worth it. I thrive in that environment, too.

I think of intentional inclusive teaching like setting up for a fun dinner party, with the right place settings, comfortable seating, and a diverse menu for different palates and diets. The prep and execution take work, but then guests each have what they need at hand to enjoy and appreciate the food and the company. Ideally, we all walk away full and happy."

Mei-Ling Hopgood
Professor, Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications

EXAMPLE

An instructor wishes to enable all students to feel a sense of belonging in an introductory STEM course that has a reputation for being challenging. After reading about inclusive pedagogy, the instructor decides to begin the course with a new exercise to help students relate their prior experiences outside the classroom to the scientific method. In a survey prior to the first day of class, students are asked to describe a time they made a prediction about something, observed an outcome, and came to a conclusion about it. Student responses range from predictions about the quality of the cafeteria food and lab courses they had taken in high school to NFL Super Bowl wins. A small number of student responses are selected and presented on a slide on the first day of class to show students how they already have a great deal of experience in the universal process of scientific inquiry. The exercise demonstrates that students, with different backgrounds and experiences, approach problems differently. The instructor finds that the exercise fosters creative approaches to problems and can help students develop their identity as scientists and feel that their contributions to science matter. The instructor uses a poll and comments from CTECs to ensure that students feel that the class was inclusive and that students from all backgrounds were seen and acknowledged.

FURTHER READING

Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching.* John Wiley & Sons.

Davis, B. G. (2009). *Tools for teaching* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Consider diverse teaching and learning frameworks and methods

Teaching is both an art and a science. Inclusive pedagogies acknowledge that all teaching and learning occur within a social and political context and embrace the significance of the context and the environment on student and instructor experiences within the learning environment. Inclusive teaching is developed as a practice over time, as instructors regularly reflect on their teaching and student learning and make changes as needed.

There are a host of empirically informed and theoretical frameworks and methods drawn from the field of education as well as the social sciences, the professions, STEM fields, the humanities, and interdisciplinary fields, all of which can inform the practice of teaching. Many of these frameworks can support educators who are committed to excellence in teaching, which includes the practice of inclusive teaching.

INCLUSIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING FRAMEWORKS

One can consider inclusive teaching frameworks as the *why* (theoretical perspective and approaches) and *how* (methods and strategies) of the teaching experience that inform and guide the *what* (course goals and content) and *who* (students and instructor/learning community). Learning and considering diverse and inclusive frameworks and approaches to course development and delivery are essential first steps toward teaching excellence. The *when* is thus the intentional work of planning in order to teach inclusively.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to inclusive teaching and learning. Instead, instructors should consider a host of flexible, research-informed frameworks and methods. Utilizing one or more of these frameworks will allow instructors to theoretically, empirically, and inclusively ground their teaching practices well before entering the classroom, lab, or studio.

Trauma-informed framework for college classrooms

Trauma-informed teaching, like inclusive teaching, assumes there are contextual factors that have the potential to inform and inspire but also derail students from learning. An inclusive educator works to mitigate the latter reality.[43] Thus, trauma-informed teaching does not entail doting over fragile "snowflakes" but instead acknowledges how trauma affects learning environments. The US Department of Health and Human Services has identified specific trauma-informed principles, including safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; and empowerment as well as cultural, historical, and gender issues.[44] Harris and Fallot offer a framework of core values for trauma-informed educators to use in tandem with a host of other inclusive teaching and learning approaches, frameworks, and pedagogies, as noted in table 1.[45] For the first core value of "safety," this framework also aids instructors in identifying campus resources and support beyond the learning environment so that educators can think about how to support student success in their courses outside the classroom. Trauma-informed teaching can be a starting point for inclusive pedagogy. All members of a university community, including instructors, must work collaboratively with a shared commitment for the safety of their students.

Backward design

Backward design is a straightforward, adaptable, and foundational framework that may be particularly helpful for those who are at the beginning of their college teaching practice.[46] Backward design helps align your course learning goals, activities, and assessments. This framework starts by inviting you as the instructor to focus on your ultimate goal—increasing knowledge and competencies. You ask yourself what you want your students in this course to gain/learn/experience, instead of asking yourself what content you want to cover in this course this term? Backward design is well supported by learning theory and has been shown to increase desired learning

TABLE 1: CORE VALUES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED TEACHING AND PRACTICE *(Source: Adapted from Harris & Fallot, 2001)*

| Core values	Questions to guide the development of trauma-informed practices
Safety (physical and emotional)	How safe is the building or environment? Are sidewalks and parking areas well lit? Are there easily accessible exits? Are directions clear and readily available? Are signs and other visual materials welcoming, clear, and legible? Are restrooms easily accessible (e.g., well marked and gender inclusive)? Are first contacts or introductions welcoming, respectful, and engaging?
Trustworthiness	Do students receive clear explanations and information about tasks and procedures? Are specific goals and objectives clear? How does the program handle challenges between role clarity and personal and professional boundaries? Choice and control? Are instructors informing each student about the available choices and options? Do students get a clear and appropriate message about their rights and responsibilities? Are there negative consequences for making particular choices? Are these necessary or arbitrary consequences? Do students have choices about attending various class sessions? Do students choose how contact is made (e.g., by phone or by mail to their home or other address)?
Empowerment	How do educators recognize each student's strengths and skills? Do educators communicate a sense of realistic optimism about students' capacity to achieve their goals? How can educators focus on skill development or enhancement for each class, contact, or service?

outcomes. Backward design invites course instructors to slow the course development process in the beginning stages and to intentionally consider the methods, course content, strategies, and, most important, their students. This intentional approach to course development can help instructors to communicate course expectations (see principle 2) and enhance learning for all students.

Inclusive instructors can follow three stages and action steps in backward design, as noted in chart 1.

1. Identify desired learning outcomes. Write student learning goals and learning outcomes.

2. Determine the acceptable evidence of learning. Develop assessments that measure progress directed toward learning outcomes.

3. Plan the learning experiences and instruction with stages 1 and 2 in mind. Develop course activities (e.g., course content and processes, student-to-student interactions, instructor-to-student interactions, community building).

Integrated course design

Integrated course design expands backward design in a way that is specific to teaching and learning in higher
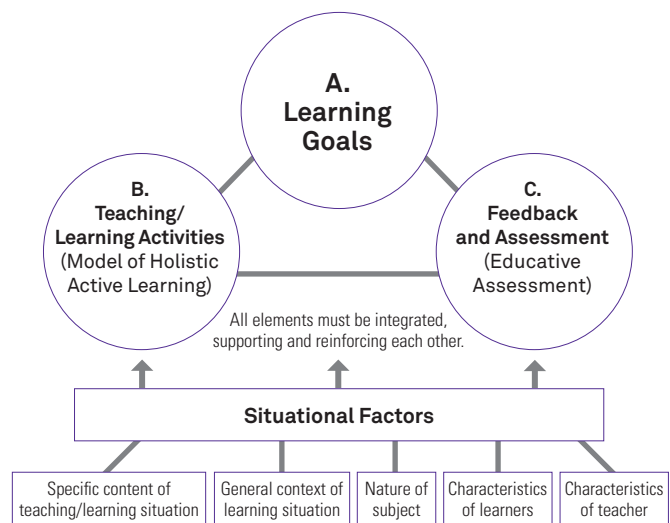
CHART 1: KEY COMPONENTS OF INTEGRATED COURSE DESIGN
(Source: Fink, 2013)

education.[47] The methodology shifts away from the static stages of backward design to offer a continuous planning strategy informed by environmental and contextual factors that may affect student learning. This inclusive framework entails an expanded process that assumes the learning environment influences the course content delivery and therefore invites instructors to consider those factors when planning teaching and assessment.

The factors include the characteristics of the learners and the teacher, the nature of the subject, and the general and specific context of the learning situation. The framework can be particularly useful to instructors reflecting on their own and students' social identities, cultivating an inclusive course climate, and considering varied assessments.

5Es

The 5E model was initially developed by the Biological Sciences Curriculum Study (BSCS).[48] It has been widely used in the sciences, but the model's five-step approach (engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration, and evaluation) is useful for all instructors as they develop individual class sessions. This model is considered an inclusive approach because the instructor operates from the premise that all students enter into the learning environment with curiosity and capacity. The 5E model is grounded in constructivist theory, which suggests that students learn best when they have opportunities to experience and interact with new phenomena and reflect upon their own learning. Many college instructors do this intuitively when they use the first few minutes of their classes to engage students with a content-based "ice breaker" activity that allows students to explore, experiment, and apply their prior knowledge and understanding. The instructor might then design the lesson of the day around elaboration by scaffolding or bridging the new learning they are aiming for, so that students gain a better capacity to articulate their deepened understanding. Ideally, the class session would finish with the instructor's providing evaluative opportunities for students to engage in self-assessments of their learning and for the instructor's assessment of students' learning during the session.

Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) was intentionally developed as a model to address diverse learning needs of students in the classroom. It invites educators to not simply react to a student who requires real or perceived specialized support but instead plan a learning experience with the assumption that all students enrolled have a diversity of learning needs and interests. This approach is less concerned with students' abilities and identities but rather with the instructors' inclusive approach to improve the learning environments for all students. It incorporates diverse strategies and learning processes that engage students who have a variety of learning

styles.[49] The model can be applied across an entire course or used for a single class or unit. Northwestern instructors can learn more about applying UDL to course design from AccessibleNU.

ADVANCED/TRANSFORMATIVE FRAMEWORKS, METHODS, AND PEDAGOGIES

Once instructors are actively and regularly engaged in their own learning and self-exploration concerning social and institutional inequities and have begun intentionally incorporating introductory inclusive frameworks and methods into their coursework, they may consider more advanced inclusive pedagogies. These methods require a more intense consideration prior to their application but should be explored as instructors' teaching excellence advances.

Transformative pedagogies that are informed by critical race theory, feminist theory, disability studies, decolonizing pedagogies, pedagogy of the oppressed, and queer theory are social-justice-oriented interventions that have advanced the aforementioned inclusive teaching and learning frameworks and methods. These transformative frameworks and methods often entail a greater emphasis on incorporating course content that critiques systems of social and economic power and resists all forms of oppression and domination. They emphasize an intentional development of educational spaces that are safe, inclusive, and liberatory, and they work to ensure that marginalized and minoritized people are valued within the classroom and in society.[50] Students' emotional expression is acknowledged in the classroom, and personal experience is viewed as a valid and valued form of knowing and meaning making.[51] Advanced inclusive educators craft and embrace a learning environment where instructors and students teach and learn from one another and knowledge is coconstructed.[52] They tend to embrace community building, collaboration, dialogue, and coalition building over competition.[53] They unite theory and action with goals of praxis and social transformation.[54] Collectively, these advanced frameworks expand upon the foundations of inclusive teaching to conceptualize the teaching and learning environment as a critical site for advancing social justice within and beyond the classroom.

TEACHING STRATEGIES

Instructors can implement one or more of the above frameworks in their teaching.

"When I think of inclusive teaching and how it's played out in my courses, I have found that the approaches I've used to create inclusive learning environments have been to the benefit of all the students in my classroom. Bringing my own experience and identity into the classroom, for example, has had a profound effect in how students see me not only as the source of content and grades but as an approachable human being they can seek out for guidance and even mentorship. That's especially important for those from underrepresented or marginalized communities, but I've seen the positive outcomes stemming from that principle with all my students. Communicating clear course standards and expectations, a good practice in normal times, has been even more vital during the pandemic and remote learning. The guidelines provide a framework that has made it easier for me to map out and visualize what I'm doing in my teaching and what needs more work. It's a continual process of learning and refining."

Marcelo Vinces
Weinberg College Adviser; Assistant Professor of Instruction, Molecular Biosciences

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EXAMPLE

An instructor chooses to implement the Universal Design for Learning framework as she prepares her courses for the following term. After reading about this framework, she makes several key changes. First, she builds additional flexibility into her syllabus, deciding to allow the participation grade to consist of posting on a course blog, emailing points for discussion, and speaking in class. Second, she works to ensure that all class texts are accessible in a digital format, contacting AccessibleNU for assistance. This includes ensuring that PDFs are properly formatted so that text-to-speech technology can be used. Finally, she ensures that all videos, including those she recorded on Panopto, have captions. When teaching the course online, she recognizes that posting slides and recorded, captioned lectures assists all students, who can access the materials asynchronously and review them at their own speed.

FURTHER READING

Ben-Moshe, L., Cory, R., Feldbaum, M., & Sagendorf, K. (Eds.) (2005). *Building pedagogical curb cuts: Incorporating disability in the university classroom and curriculum*. Syracuse University Press.

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Davidson, S. (n.d.) Trauma-informed practices for postsecondary education: A guide. https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/trauma-informed-practices-postsecondary-508.pdf

Teaching and learning frameworks. (n.d.) https://poorvucenter.yale.edu/BackwardDesign

Assess your inclusive teaching

Instructors should assess, or self-evaluate, their inclusive teaching practices and pedagogical choices as well as solicit perspectives from students and others, such as faculty colleagues and learning and teaching center experts. Stephen Brookfield, in *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*, argues that teachers must regularly examine their teaching through the lenses of self, students, and colleagues as well as through engagement with theoretical literature (see principle 8).[55] This is particularly important for continued growth in inclusive teaching practices.

To create inclusive learning environments, critical reflection is necessary to uncover areas of strength and those in need of improvement. Loughran finds, "Reflection is effective when it leads the teacher to make meaning from the situation in ways that enhance understanding so that she or he comes to see and understand the practice setting from a variety of viewpoints."[56] Frequent reflection is necessary because creating inclusive learning environments is an ongoing process.

The self-reflection on social identity discussed in principle 1 should also be directed at one's pedagogical practices and the equity and power dynamics in the classroom. Just as we can be unaware of our unconscious biases, we may be unaware of how they influence behaviors in the classroom unless we actively reflect.[57] Using surveys; quick, formative assessments; peer observations; and other similar measures, faculty can regularly scrutinize, interrogate, and reflect on their practice so that they may improve.

Because student learning is affected by course climate, it is important to understand student perceptions and to recognize that different students may perceive climate differently from one another and from the instructor's intended climate. Student feedback can uncover subtle behaviors and class interactions that leave students feeling unwelcome in the course or that negatively affect their learning. When practices intended to be inclusive do not affect students in a positive manner, it is crucial that instructors reflect critically and make changes.[58]

Student feedback can allow students to take an active role in shaping their learning and provides the opportunity for instructors to model reflection, revision, and adaptation.[59] In this way, instructors become "co-agent[s] with the pupils in the learning process."[60]

Instructors can also solicit external feedback, reflection, and evaluation from peers or from a campus resource such as the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching. Outside observers not only can provide observations and data on your teaching practice and methods but also can collaborate to create solutions.[61]

When evaluating one's inclusive teaching, the processes of meaningful evaluation and reflection can be adaptive (leading to improving practice), collaborative (learning from others), and transformative (responding to social, political, ethical, and moral issues) and lead to more inclusive learning environments.[62]

TEACHING STRATEGIES

1. **Reflect on your own experiences as a learner and as a teacher.** Brookfield suggests keeping a teaching journal and reflecting on lessons from role models and professional development opportunities. Reflect on how your biases may affect your teaching (see principle 1).

2. **Reflect on your inclusive teaching strategies.** What practices do you utilize to encourage active learning and create a welcoming course climate? Consider the strategies throughout this resource, noting which you use frequently, occasionally, or not at all, and which you might adapt. Apply the following questions from the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching to your inclusive teaching:

   - Which of the techniques, approaches, and ideas employed in teaching were successful and which were less successful, and why? What might you do differently next time?

   - How did students with varied social identities react to and interact with the strategies and materials? Were there any discernible differences across social identity groups?

- What lessons have been learned for subsequent courses? What did you learn about your teaching or students? Were your ideas about teaching and learning challenged in any way?

3. **Seek student feedback in a variety of forms** beyond end-of-term student evaluations. Brookfield recommends that instructors seek student feedback weekly with a short question on learning. For inclusive teaching, this question could ask about comfort participating in class discussions or projects or about which instructor actions were helpful to learning. Methods for soliciting student feedback include polling in Canvas, which can be done anonymously, and using a notecard at the end of in-person classes. Respond to the class in a general way, without directly identifying students who provided feedback, and make adjustments when necessary.

4. **Solicit feedback from peers.** Peers can observe classroom dynamics and pedagogical practices. Peers can also be asked to gather data, such as who participates and how often. Benefits of peer observers and evaluators are the potential for collaborative problem-solving and the opportunity to promote a department-wide focus on improving inclusive teaching.

5. **Solicit feedback from external evaluators.** Faculty at Northwestern can seek external feedback from the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching. Depending on the course, the center can provide structured observations, surveys, focus groups, and consultations as well as a small group analysis (SGA), which is a confidential service for Northwestern faculty, postdocs, and graduate students. The SGA provides instructors with detailed and constructive midterm feedback directly from their students about the instruction and their learning in the class. This process often yields information and insights that do not emerge from end-of-term course evaluations.

EXAMPLE

An instructor has modified a course he has frequently taught by adding more time for class discussion to encourage a learning-centered approach with enhanced collaboration and course dialogue. Midway through the term, he solicits feedback from students, using an anonymous poll. He is surprised to find that some students feel excluded from discussion. He reports the findings to the class and reviews the classroom discussion guidelines that class members created on the first day. He also asks a colleague to observe class discussion. The colleague notes that the instructor tends to call on the same students and suggests waiting or asking students to write for a minute before raising hands, in order to encourage participation from more students. The instructor researches additional strategies for encouraging all students to participate; for each strategy, he notes whether he engages in that method frequently, occasionally, or not at all. The instructor also reflects on his teaching. He considers how unconscious biases might affect who he calls on and who feels empowered to participate during discussion. He incorporates new strategies for discussion the following term.

FURTHER READING

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Stay current with inclusive teaching literature and strategies

Committing to inclusive teaching and to fostering inclusive learning environments is not a one-time exercise. On the contrary, it is a continuous practice to learn, implement, and evaluate inclusive teaching practices. Inclusive pedagogy is social justice oriented, regardless of discipline. Instructors with an inclusive teaching mindset understand and value the importance of keeping abreast of current practices. They deliberately learn more about critical pedagogies and teaching practices on diversity in education. Furthermore, they do not limit their commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion only to the classroom setting; they seek ways to apply their pledge to their departments and disciplines.

Stephen Brookfield argues that an important component of self-evaluation is through engagement with theoretical literature (see principle 7). Engaging with "educational theory, philosophy, and research can provide new and provocative ways of seeing our actions and the meanings students take from our work." Theoretical literature "sometimes also introduces us to new vistas that broaden our understanding and force us to reappraise old assumptions."[63]

Instructors should examine the diversity in their discipline or field and seek ways to further their knowledge. Diverse teaching strategies can vary by discipline, and instructors benefit from learning about the teaching practices that work best within their discipline. In "Small World: Crafting an Inclusive Classroom (No Matter What You Teach)," Mary A. Armstrong notes that "many people feel more comfortable learning about inclusivity on their own turf. Disciplines have powerful social cultures as well as intellectual cultures."[64]

Armstrong argues that for instructors in STEM and other disciplines with course content that is sometimes considered objective or unrelated to diversity, self-education is especially important because "once you've spent some time looking at the same old world with brand new eyes, you may even find that the course material that once seemed so completely neutral to you is not quite as disinterested and unbiased as you once thought." Furthermore, such disciplines "are often the exact places where a more welcoming climate could do

the most good in promoting diversity and facilitating broader student success."[65]

There are numerous starting points for instructors to begin self-education. For example, instructors can engage with revolutionary classic works in psychology and education such as Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*; bell hooks's *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*; Beverly Daniel Tatum's *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?: A Psychologist Explains the Development of Racial Identity*; Claude Steele's *Whistling Vivaldi: And Other Clues to How Stereotypes Affect Us*; and Derald Wing Sue's *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*. More recent works include Bettina Love's *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*. As Armstrong argues, such works "invite us to consider targeted, practical ways to rethink pedagogy as a social act of inclusivity as well as an act of instruction."[66]

TEACHING STRATEGIES

1. **Read inclusive, cross-discipline pedagogy literature.** Seek campuswide opportunities to read and discuss inclusive teaching literature, such as seminars offered by the Searle Center for Advancing Learning and Teaching.

2. **Read literature that specifically addresses teaching in your field.** Seek discussions or sources through societies in your discipline or your network of colleagues beyond Northwestern. If you have an RSS feed to stay abreast of literature in your discipline, add a few discipline-based education journals that can help you be aware of new ideas for teaching in your field.

3. **Encourage department discussion** by bringing in a speaker on developing pedagogies of inclusivity in your field.[67] You can also join your colleagues in a reading group or a roundtable discussion series, such as A Seat at the Table: Centering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Learning and Teaching.

4. **Familiarize yourself with the works cited in this guide.**

"For me, an inclusive classroom is one where each student's experience of learning is validated. This requires acknowledging the vast array of potential starting points and approaches that students bring to problems. It requires recognizing that each student's challenge with material will be different and framing these challenges as equally important and necessary for productive learning. To be inclusive is to resist the temptation to view a group of students as a monolith and to see the humanity in each person's struggle toward constructing knowledge."

Stephanie Knezz
Assistant Professor of Instruction, Director of Undergraduate Organic Chemistry Laboratory

EXAMPLE

An instructor has taught their signature course for the past 15 years. The course and instructor are popular among students in the department; the instructor recently received a university teaching award. In the last two terms, however, the instructor received feedback through their course evaluations that some students are mildly dissatisfied with the structure of assignments in the course. Specifically, the students mention that they encounter inequity during group projects. One student mentions that several group partners regularly dismiss her ideas and minimize her contributions. While the specific student feedback does not reflect the majority of students' opinions, the instructor recognizes its importance. The instructor facilitates a class discussion that emphasizes the importance of different points of view while denouncing stereotyping and microaggressions. Furthermore, the instructor consults their disciplinary society for literature on inclusive teaching in the field and confers with colleagues in the department about group-project practices. Reading the literature, the instructor discovers evidence-based strategies to establish equitable, rotating roles within groups for projects and decides to incorporate these techniques in the course. They also recommend to the chair that the department meet periodically to read and discuss these sources on inclusive pedagogy and to share practices.

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Glossary

Diversity: Diversity is a principle of higher education that argues that academic communities are enriched by the presence and contributions of students, staff, and faculty from diverse identities, sociodemographic backgrounds, and life experiences.

Equity: In higher education, equity refers to policies, initiatives, and practices that provide the supports students need to achieve equal outcomes on indicators of academic success and achievement. The goal of educational equity is to close the opportunity gap for students from groups that have been historically disadvantaged and marginalized.

Ethnicity: Ethnicity is a socially constructed concept related to and often used interchangeably with race. It refers to groups of people who share characteristics such as ancestry, heritage, country of origin, language, religion, forms of dress, and food.

Gender identity: Gender identity is a personal conception of oneself as a woman, a man, both, neither, or anywhere along the gender spectrum and influences how people think and act according to their gendered selves. Gender identity, in nearly all instances, is self-identified and can be the same as or different from a person's sex assigned at birth.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality is a theoretical framework for understanding how the identities of people who are members of multiple marginalized socially and culturally constructed categories intersect or converge to create different modes of discrimination and privilege.

Learning objectives: A statement of the knowledge or skills a student should acquire by the end of a class or course.

Liberatory pedagogy: A pedagogy that is an anti-oppressive educational approach designed to liberate minds and level the playing fields between teachers and students.

Race: Race is a socially constructed concept that refers to categorization of people by physical characteristics (e.g., skin color, complexion, facial features). People may identify with a single race or as biracial or multiracial. It is important to note that racial groups are not monoliths and that the significance and meaning of race varies among people within a racial group.

Social identity: People's social identity indicates who they are in terms of the groups to which they belong. Social identity groups are usually defined by physical, social, and mental characteristics. Examples of social identities are race, ethnicity, gender, social class, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, disabilities and abilities, and religion and religious beliefs.

Socioeconomic status and social class: Socioeconomic status is a position in a socially ranked system determined by a person's education, income, and occupation and occupational prestige. Students' socioeconomic status is usually linked to their parents' or guardians' level of education, income, and occupational prestige. Social class as a social identity relates to the importance, affect, and emotions associated with a person's membership or self-categorization within a social class group (e.g., working class). Socioeconomic status is not always aligned with a person's social class identification. In the US, for example, those who identify as middle class vary on every indicator of socioeconomic status.

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Resources

Accessibility, Counseling, Inclusivity, and Psychological Services

- AccessibleNU
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)
- InclusiveNU

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Northwestern

- Admissions Statement on Diversity
- Bienen School of Music
- Campus Inclusion and Community (CIC)
- Counseling and Psychological Services Diversity Value Statement
- Diversity and Inclusion at the Feinberg School of Medicine
- Diversity and Inclusion at the Graduate School
- Diversity and Inclusion at the Kellogg School of Management
- Diversity and Inclusion at the Pritzker School of Law
- Diversity and Inclusion at Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences
- Diversity and Media at the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the McCormick School of Engineering

Learning and Teaching

- Academic Support and Learning Advancement
- Affordable Instructional Resources
- Searle Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning
- Social Justice Education

Student Services

- Books for Cats
- International Student and Scholar Services
- Multicultural Student Affairs
- LGBTQIA+ Resources
- Student Enrichment Services
- Student Veterans' Resources
- Undergraduate Advising

Related Centers and Offices

- Faculty Diversity and Excellence
- Gender and Sexuality Resource Center
- Native American and Indigenous Initiatives
- Office of Equity
- Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion
- Office of the Provost
- Religious and Spiritual Life
- Women's Center