

Inclusive Classrooms, Inclusive Campus

An Inclusive Classroom Teaching Symposium

Inclusive Classroom Management Session

Tips: Approaches to Diversity & Inclusion in Large Lecture and Small Seminar Classes

Dr. Marcus Ashford

Engage the Students

- Be interactive. Otherwise you may as well just read the text.
- Include everyone. Draw on their differences to help make points.
- Be human. It's okay to be wrong. Very often we are discussing the bleeding edge of science and technology. Students appreciate an honest "I really don't know, but I will do some reading and bring some knowledge to next class."
- Make them comfortable asking questions. Teach them how to ask questions.

Look for the Loner and the Lonely

- Many students have imposter syndrome, or don't know many people. This can be especially amplified for students that don't see classmates that look like them.
- Don't let them hide in the anonymity inherent in larger classes.
- Be especially vigilant in small classes. With no place to hide, many students feel as if they're under a microscope.

Be a Listener.

- Listen to what students have to say. More times than not, there's a good nugget that can be mined for deeper discussion.
- Get to know your students. You're not there to be a friend, but having genuine interest in their interests leads to better understanding interaction.
- Learn their weaknesses and perceived weaknesses and help them turn them into strengths. Is not the purpose of learning to fill gaps in one's skillset?
- My super secret tip: a little conversation goes a long way in picking up a difficult accent.

Random Access.

- Call on everyone. Avoid the trap of getting answers from the same students. If you can be truly random, it encourages the students to read ahead.
- Don't let them get away with having no answer. Move on to keep the discussion moving, but return to that student that class period.
- I have every student write their names on popsicle sticks and call on students by lottery.

The Eyes Have It

- Learn your students' body language. They speak volumes with arms, legs, lips, but especially eyes.
- It is relatively easy to tell if students understand or not.

- Also of import is the ability to recognize when a student may need a day off from answering questions.

Keep the Spirit Moving

- It is vitally important to keep students from “signing off,” from feeling like they don’t belong. How we react to students’ input in class is crucial. Little is worse than doing something that makes a student feel “Well, I won’t be saying anything else this semester.”
- Students’ answers/comment are often off target. To differentiate between the ones who are really trying and those who are wasting class time, ask deeper questions: “Where are you coming from?”, “What made you think of that?”, “I’m not sure what you mean... tell me more.” This approach often gets the student and conversation on track and it almost always silences the comics without any need to be heavy-handed.
- Sometimes you just have to say “No, that’s not where we’re going with this topic, but hold on to that. I think it will come up later.”

Don’t force the issue.

- No desires, goals, etc., are worth putting a student in an uncomfortable position. The very actions we take to facilitate inclusion can also make a student feel singled out

Tips: Problem-Solving Approaches of Underrepresented Student Groups in STEM Courses*

Dr. Viola Acoff

The Dynamics of Group Work

- Avoid any form of “social engineering,” before knowing much about the students and their academic performance.
 - Randomly assigned groups will probably produce the best results.
 - Change groups at least once during the semester to allow for any distracting social dynamics within groups to be dispelled.
 - Once the instructor has some direct knowledge of student performance, make some assignments that pair those doing well with those who are struggling. This will make the entire class perform better and allow the course to proceed at the quickest pace that remains inclusive.

Gatekeeping vs. Coaching

- In many STEM disciplines, there are particular courses that are designed or perceived as “weed out” courses. The approach of the instructor to these introductory courses can play a major role for all students.
 - The anxiety and stress created by approaches that assume that “not all of you are going to make it” are particularly acute for those students who from underrepresented groups.
 - The coaching approach recognizes that academic achievement is based on teamwork and a group approach.

- Success in STEM research and professions depends on groups, intellectual communities, and shared knowledge. This team approach is true from the very beginning stages in introductory courses, and instructors can play an important role in socializing students early to the collaborative nature of intellectual inquiry and achievement which is vital in STEM fields.

Problem-Based vs. Concept-Based Instruction

- Many STEM disciplines place great emphasis on working problem sets, making calculations, and memorizing long lists of formulae or specific terms, structures, or data. Conceptual approaches to knowledge in the STEM fields provide solid undergirding to a much broader range of students, who will then be able to undertake the cultivation of the necessary skills to move to higher levels in these disciplines.
 - Instructors need to insure that there is a balance between inductive and deductive reasoning, both in the student assignments and activities, as well as in the class lectures and demonstrations.
 - Instructors should be cognizant to the fact that it is very typical of underrepresented students, both women and students of varied backgrounds, to work out their own ways of doing problems that also arrive at the correct answers.

Study Groups

- Participation in out-of-class study groups has been shown to be one of the main factors in student success in STEM disciplines.

Avoid “Under-Teaching”

- Be cognizant to avoid the urge to not want to put students from underrepresented groups “on-the-spot” during class. This usually arises from an instructor’s sympathetic and well-meaning attempt to ease an underrepresented student’s feeling of possible isolation and conspicuousness. However, this sympathetic action can lead to depriving these students of teaching attention and opportunities.

* *Adapted from:* “The Multicultural Lab: Diversity Issues in STEM Classes,” A.T. Miller, In Teaching Inclusively: Resources for Course, Department & Institutional Change in Higher Education, Mathew L. Ouellett (editor), New Forums Press, Stillwater, OK 2005, pp. 451-459.

Tips: Classroom Management Practices for Inclusion of International Students

Dr. Fran Oneal

- It is easy to make assumptions based on name or appearance: students may appear to be from another culture but have lived in the US for a long time and speak English well. At the same time, students may appear to be “mainstream Americans” but are not. If class size allows, have students introduce themselves and where they’re from (Hi, I’m Bailey and I’m from Georgia; Hi, I’m Omar and I’m from Saudi Arabia). If class size is too large for individual introductions, invite anyone in the class to stay afterwards and introduce themselves to you, **“especially if you are new to the University of Alabama or to the US.”** This does not single out any group but leaves the door wide open. Offer this option for the first few class sessions.

- International students may be more reluctant to participate in class discussion due to their accents or language skills. Model patience for all to see by **giving them time** to express their responses. Repeat their comments, if necessary, so that all the students hear and understand.
- Indicate to the entire class your openness to accommodate **anyone's** need for you to repeat statements for clarity and to explain assignments, practices, or tasks that may be unfamiliar. Examples of unfamiliar practices might be the use of Blackboard for routinely turning in assignments or what to bring to class on test-taking day.
- International students will tend to sit together. Arrange for them to work with non-international students in paired/small group assignments. **Use grouping strategies** other than, "Turn to the person next to you and...." One method would be to hand out/have students pick up as they enter index cards numbered 1-6 and then divide into 6 groups by card number.
- Group projects may be less familiar to international students and/or they may feel constrained in speaking up. **Clarify expectations** about group work for all students to hear. Be cognizant of the need to facilitate communication within groups if work seems to be faltering.
- International students may not yet have experienced standards of academic integrity as defined in the US. Emphasize academic integrity in your course introduction and again prior to assignments' due dates and test-taking dates. **Share information about where students can find out what constitutes academic misconduct if they are unclear about that.** It's something that all students should hold in mind, not just international students.
- Be conscious of using "We" and "Our" when referring to the practices of, or views held by, many Americans/the US government/US experts in a field. Instead of saying "We are divided over the use of the death penalty," **re-phrase to say more accurately**, "The American public, when polled, is divided over the use of the death penalty." Instead of "We first became militarily engaged in Iraq in 2003," re-phrase to say that "The US military first became engaged in Iraq in 2003." Rephrase "We do not tolerate sexual harassment in practitioner/client relationships," to be "The American Psychological Association does not tolerate...." Not everyone in the room may consider themselves part of "we" or "us" in those contexts. That language also brings to mind the Us vs. Them, or Insiders vs. Outsiders, dichotomy. Use language that acknowledges the diversity of the class.
- Similarly, realize that not everyone shares the same **cultural touchstones and memories**. "We all remember where we were on 9/11," or "We all remember learning about World War II in our high school history classes," are statements that simply won't apply to everyone in the classroom.