Incorporating the Principles of Inclusive Teaching in Your Instructional Practice

Inclusive teaching for medical education is the deliberate cultivation of classroom and clinical learning environments where all learners (of varied gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ability, ethnicity, etc.) are treated equitably, have equal access to learning, and feel supported in their learning.

The principles of inclusive teaching include **transparency**, **structured interactions**,

engaging difference, and **cultivation of academic belonging**.

TRANSPARENCY *Clear communication about norms, expectations, evaluation criteria*

- Clearly communicate the purpose of, and evaluation criteria for, tasks and assignments.[1-2]

- Be explicit about how you would like learners, who may come from backgrounds with a range of cultural norms, to address you.

- Dedicate in-person time for learners to ask questions about tasks and expectations.

- Share your preferences for how learners should communicate with you (email, text, pager, etc.).

- Explain the learning objectives of didactic activities.

- Communicate your sense of faculty and learners' respective roles in shaping and guiding group discussions.

- Be explicit, verbally and/or in writing, about your goal of creating an equitable and inclusive learning environment.

STRUCTURED INTERACTIONS *Designing protocols and processes to make sure group interactions do not default to patterns of privileging already privileged voices, or otherwise replicating systemic inequities*

- Develop guidelines for group discussions. (See examples here and here.)

- In facilitated discussions, use strategies for including a range of voices: e.g., take a queue, ask to hear from those who have not spoken, wait until several hands are raised to call on anyone, or use paired or small group conversations to seed larger discussions.

- Task learners to work in pairs or small groups on brief, well-defined activities (with a timeline and specific goals/outcomes).

- Establish processes for ensuring you are giving equitable time and attention to each learner.

- Start with less difficult questions, then move to more advanced topics, allowing learners to utilize each other's expertise or look things up.

- Model through your actions and words that it is acceptable to indicate, "I don't know."

- For in-depth questioning, give learners time to gather their thoughts in writing before discussing.[3]

CRITICALLY ENGAGING DIFFERENCE *Acknowledging learners' different identities, experiences, strengths, and needs; leveraging diversity as an asset for learning*

- Reflect upon and share the ways your own identities shape your relationship to your work/the discipline.[4]

- Invite learners to identify examples from their own arenas of knowledge or expertise to illustrate concepts.

- Welcome requests for documented accommodations as a chance to include everyone more fully in learning.

- Communicate concern for learners' well-being, and share information about support resources.

- Present content in a variety of modalities (readings, diagrams, lectures, podcasts, etc.) rather than relying on one mode of engagement to assist students with processing disabilities as well as non-native English speakers.[5]

- Try to accompany verbal instructions with a written corollary.

ACADEMIC BELONGING *Cultivating learners' sense of connection to the discipline and scholarly/ professional community*

- Communicate high expectations and your belief that all learners can succeed.[6-7] (e.g., "I'm giving you this feedback because I have very high expectations and I know that you can meet them.")

- Allow for productive risk and failure. Emphasize that struggle and challenge are important parts of the learning process, rather than signs of deficiency.[8]

- Assess learners' prior knowledge about your field and relevant topics so you can accurately align instruction.

- Identify and use learner names, what they desire to be called, and how it is pronounced.[9]

- Emphasize the range of identities and backgrounds of experts who have contributed to your field, and/or sponsor discussion about the reasons for a history of limited access to the field.

- Acknowledge institutional events or incidents that may be creating barriers to learners' sense of being valued and ready to learn; acknowledge the differential effects incidents have on different learners.

- Avoid generalizations that may not include all learners. These might include assumptions about life experience, political ideation, economic means, or future goals.

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