

Building All-Inclusive Classrooms



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Recap on trans* inclusive classrooms

- Learn students' names and pronouns
- Set the tone for safe, brave, and open spaces
- Examine your course content and learning goals; adjust accordingly

Axiomatic

- Teaching is hard work; it is complex and unpredictable
- Be prepared for the unexpected to occur



Teachers are pulled in different directions

What is the space of the classroom and who are its inhabitants?

“Even though some of us might wish to conceptualize our classrooms as culturally neutral or might choose to ignore the cultural dimensions, **students cannot check their sociocultural identities at the door**, nor can they instantly transcend their current level of development . . . Therefore, it is important that the pedagogical strategies we employ in the classroom reflect an understanding of social identity development so that we can **anticipate the tensions that might occur in the classroom and be proactive about them**”

-Ambrose, et al.

How can you be prepared for the unexpected?

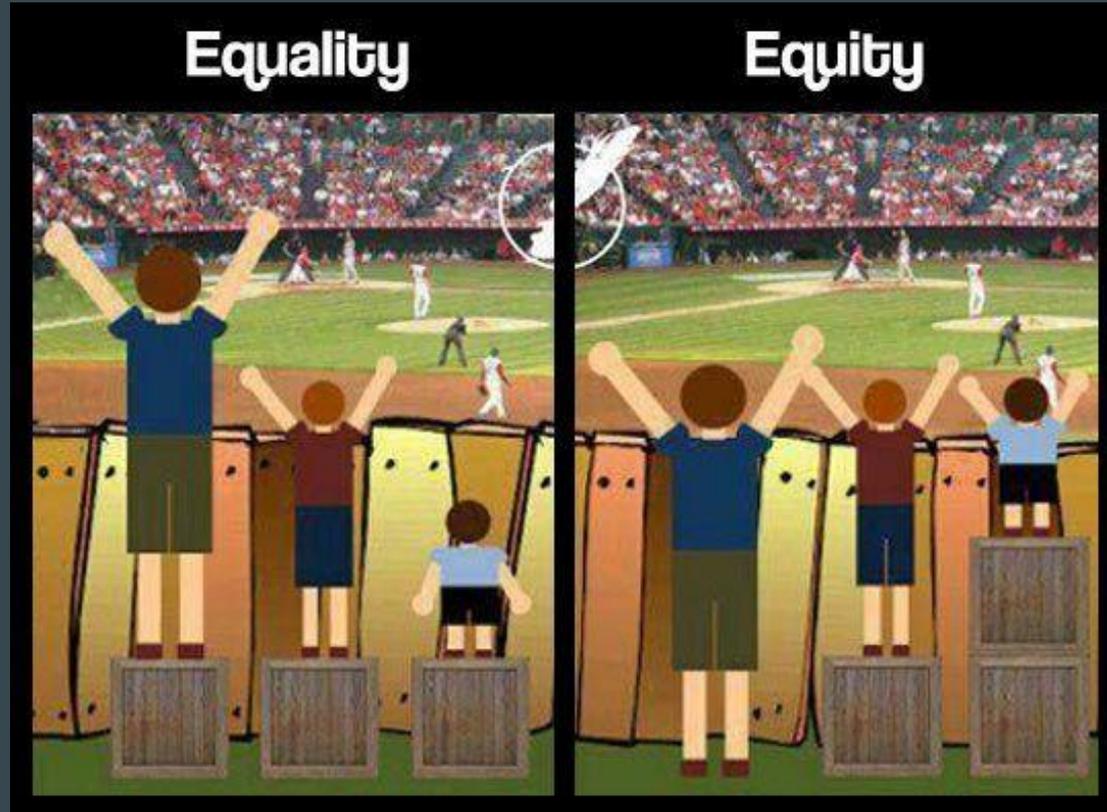
Be proactive

“This **framework of diversity too often allows for passivity** . . . when it comes to issues of diversity and equity, a social justice framework necessarily puts the **onus of responsibility onto the individual faculty member** rather than the institution alone.” - *Stachowiak*

Dana Stachowiak differentiates between passive diversity training and active social justice/critical consciousness work. This means there is a difference between simple diversity awareness and an active process with a goal “to enable people to develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems, and to develop a sense of agency and capacity to interrupt and change oppressive patterns and behaviors in themselves and in the institutions and communities of which they are a part.” In other words, when it comes to issues of diversity and equity, a social justice framework necessarily puts the onus of responsibility onto the individual faculty member rather than the institution alone. What that means is really understanding that “because of different learning styles, cultures, or family structures, for example, the resources our students need to be successful will not be the same.” We need to understand the difference between equality and equity.

With the understanding that the goal is equity in the classroom, created by recognizing and actively working to address systemic difference, inequality, and access to resources, you have to do more hard work.

Stachowiak suggests we start by examining our own identities. But from there, we can interrogate so much more.



How can you be prepared for the unexpected?

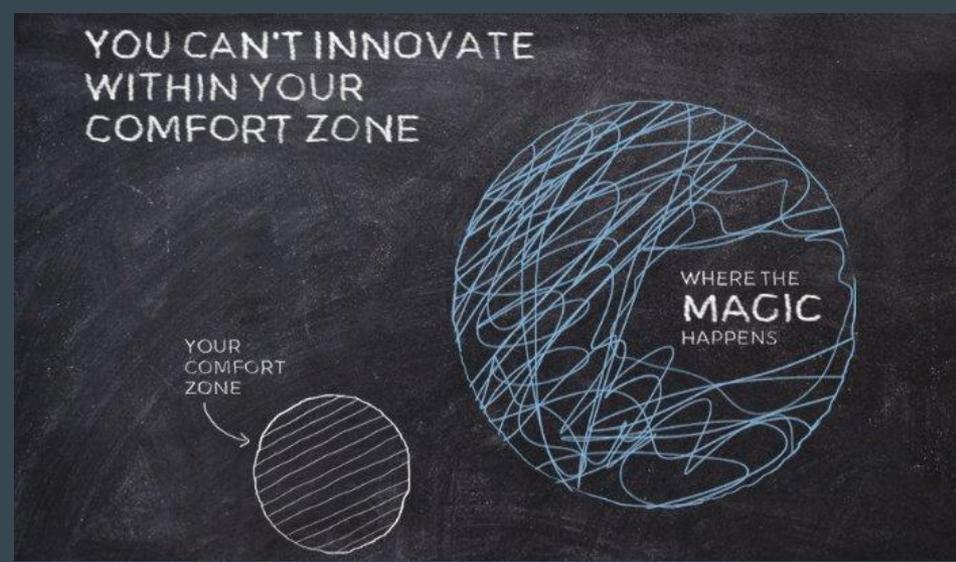
Be proactive (You're here; you already are!)

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Do more hard work:

- Examine yourself, your identity, and your relationship to power and privilege
- Raise your awareness
- Question your own assumptions
- Recognize microaggressions and stereotypes

Breakout



- What are some assumptions you hold about students or particular “types” of students?
- What are some tensions you anticipate happening in the classroom?
- How might you (or how have you) addressed those assumptions or tensions?

Some Assumptions

- Students who are struggling in class will feel empowered to reach out for help
 - This is particularly a roadblock for first generation or low income students who have never felt empowered to ask for help, who do not have familial knowledge about the college experience. But any student in your classroom may need extra encouragement to visit office hours, the writing center, or a tutor, etc.
- Students from certain groups or backgrounds are underperformers, unmotivated, or “not ready” for college level work.
 - This assumption is often placed on students who speak with an “accent,” whether regional [Southern, or AAVE (African American Vernacular English), for example] or on students for whom English is not their first language. Built into this are assumptions about intellectual ability, writing competency, and work ethic.
- Visible minorities are comfortable articulating the perspectives or educating others about their group/identities.
 - Be aware that a student may not feel comfortable speaking about or teaching you and the rest of the class about trans issues, race issues, class issues, religious issues, or disability issues, etc. just because they identify with that particular group/culture. It would be unfair, an exploitation of power, and an emotional burden to rely on a student to do so. Also recognize that there is much diversity even within those communities, so you cannot burden any one student to speak on behalf of a whole group and you should not assume that all the LGBT students or students of color in your class will agree on issues/content related to their group.

Strategies

Designing the space of the classroom

-Accessibility and learning diversity-

The accessibility of a space is often limited by architecture, but you can take into account the format for your teaching and rearrange the room to accommodate different modalities of instruction. Set up the room differently for small group discussions, large group discussions, lectures, or other types of activities. Think about your learning goals and how you want everyone in the room to engage with each other in physical space.

Setting/Adjusting the classroom climate

-Building community: “Icebreakers” and “Ground Rules” or Brave Space-

Build community through introduction activities in the first week (these may or may not be connected to course content). For larger classes, ask students to write you a letter or create informational notecards. Build rapport as an ongoing process: chat with students before and after class, encourage students to come to office hours. Be willing to adjust the climate throughout the quarter. Utilize midterm evaluation or small group evaluations. Be willing to adjust course content and maintain a transparent pedagogy.



Resources

Ambrose, et al. *How Learning Works: Seven Research-based Principles for Smart Teaching*. Jossey Bass, 2010.

“Building Inclusive Classrooms.” Center for Teaching Excellence, Cornell University. [Click here for resource.](#)

Saunders, Shari and Diana Kardia. “Creating Inclusive College Classrooms.” Center for Research on Teaching and Learning, University of Michigan. [Click here for resource.](#)

Stachowiak, Dana. “Re-envisioning Diversity in Higher Education: From Raising Awareness to Building Critical Consciousness Among Faculty.” *The NEA Higher Education Journal: Thought & Action*. Winter 2015. 117-128. [Click here for article.](#)