



At Michigan State University, inclusive classroom practices are vital for fostering a supportive learning environment for all students. Recognizing the unique needs, abilities, and backgrounds of each learner, inclusive education strives to create a space where every student feels valued, included and empowered to reach their full potential. By removing barriers to learning, inclusive classrooms promote not only academic growth but also social and emotional development. By implementing various strategies and practices, you will be able to create an environment where all students can actively participate and engage in the learning process.

Here are some tips to make all students feel welcome and included in your class. These tips can be applied to other educational spaces including workshops, seminars or conferences.

WHEN YOU'RE SPEAKING TO A CLASS

1. Re-examine your cultural assumptions. Not all students know about specific cultural references such as U.S. football or what a "prom" is. References like these may help you bond with some students but may leave others out.
2. Unpack and explain any unfamiliar cultural references that you decide to use. Better yet, involve the students in cultural sharing.
3. Make analogies and connections that all students can relate to - perhaps based on student life or familiar MSU culture. Invite your students to brainstorm and share such analogies - they'll learn even better when they learn actively.
4. Explain a complex idea multiple ways: with a visual image, a story or an example.
5. Be more thoughtful when you use jokes. Using a culture, identity or traumatic experience in a joke may be considered offensive or hurtful. Something that one person finds funny may not make sense or could have an alternative connotation in another context.

WHEN YOU'RE ASKING STUDENTS TO SPEAK IN CLASS

1. Make sure students have had adequate time to prepare. Supply any required readings or materials in advance. Offer alternative methods of learning course content, such as videos and slides.
2. Give students time to prepare and respond to discussion. Class discussions are part of our educational experience, but some students may need time to make the adjustment from a lecture-only system. Working in pairs and small groups allows students to prepare and build confidence and skills needed to eventually speak in front of the whole class.
3. We have so much to learn from one another. Invite your students to share or compare aspects of their own languages or cultures in class, both with the class-at-large and within small groups.
4. Don't assume that students whispering together or looking at their phones are escaping from the class discussion. They may be looking up an unfamiliar word or reference.

WHEN YOU'RE RESPONDING TO STUDENT WORK

1. Keep in mind that correction isn't always equivalent to instruction. Circling every grammatical error in a student's writing may overwhelm and embarrass them, rather than helping them learn.

2. Ensure that the criticism matches the mistake and balance negative comments with appreciation for what has been done well. This will encourage the student to keep working and learning. Focus on what's going well at least as much as what is "wrong."
3. View "plagiarism" and/or collaborative student work with care. Some students come from cultures where ideas are shared and are not familiar with academic attribution. It can take time for such students to learn about practices, like citation, that involve the perception of ideas that can be "owned." Also, some may come from a culture where collaboration is key, and where students typically study and memorize together. Always make your expectations clear.