

Steps Toward Creating a More Accessible and Inclusive Classroom

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Start here...

- *realize that many individuals view their disability as an asset, not a deficit
- *recognize that disability is often defined by the environment an individual is in
- *make sure you are not making ableist statements in the classroom
- *avoid negative descriptions of disability (ex: “suffers from a condition,” “confined/bound to a wheelchair”)
- *use [person-first language](#) rather than disability-first language (ex: “student with a learning disability,” not “learning disabled student”), unless an individual discloses that they prefer to use identity-first language (for example: some individuals on the autism spectrum may prefer to call themselves [“autistic” rather than “a person with autism”](#); someone may identify as part of the [Deaf](#) community)
- *realize that impact matters, regardless of intention
- *do not assume students with disabilities are less capable or lacking knowledge/skills
- *do not be surprised when your students with diverse needs are successful
- *tell a colleague that you are committing to the work of being a more inclusive educator

Beginning

- *add literature/resources from neurodiverse and diverse authors to assigned course readings and class activities
- *replace and/or supplement outdated readings
- *provide electronic files of reading, resources, presentations, and other materials
- *be willing to answer student questions, even those that seem repetitive
- *understand that all behavior is a function, or indicative of something else going on; ask if students need support rather than punish them
- *[syllabus](#) to include Statement from the [Disability Resource Office](#), Statement on Academic Diversity, Religious Observance Policy, and CARE resources
- *create community guidelines for discussion that includes intention and impact/anti-bias language
- *immediately address ableist/biased remarks in the classroom through discussion
- *[syllabus](#) to include statement of Classroom Environment that encourages regard for others and respects free speech while not tolerating hate speech
- *when presenting visuals/images, also provide a description of the image
- *always provide Closed Captioning on posted videos (lectures, resources, etc.)
- *incorporate impact and perspective of groups of diverse abilities in policies of the past and present
- *encourage students (and ourselves as faculty) to analyze research and articles to ensure they represent the perspectives of marginalized groups, follow up with questioning why and providing additional resources
- *promote self-advocacy
- *suggested readings:

- Armstrong, T. (2011). [Neurodiversity: A concept whose time has come](#). In *The power of neurodiversity* (pp. 1-26). Da Capo Lifelong Books.
- ASAN. (2021). Position statements. Autistic Self Advocacy Network. <https://autisticadvocacy.org/about-asan/position-statements/>.
- Rasheed, S. A., Fore, C., & Miller, S. (2006). [Person-centered planning: Practices, promises, and provisos](#). *Journal for Vocational Special Needs Education*, 28(3), 47-59.
- Tomlinson, C. A. (2014). [The differentiated classroom: Responding to the needs of all learners \(2nd ed.\)](#). ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>.
- Valle, J. W., & Connor, D. J. (2019). [Rethinking disability: A disability studies approach to inclusive practices](#) (2nd ed.). Routledge.



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Intermediate, all the beginning steps plus...

- *check out the CCE's [YouTube channel](#) for video resources on Disability and Accessibility
- *syllabus revisions to include adding Student Learning Objectives, Essential Questions, and Course Descriptions related to advocacy/inclusion/preparing students to be agents of change
- *examine syllabus to make sure policies (late work, absence, participation grades, etc.) do not indirectly or directly target students with disabilities OR demonstrate bias toward neurotypical students (for example: a "cameras on" Zoom policy may disproportionately punish students who require accommodations or have diverse learning needs; deductions for late work may punish students who need flexibility due to medical or mental health needs; requiring students to disclose personal details in order to receive extensions or incompletes disrespects students' privacy of health and disability needs)
- *be willing to adjust your expectations through flexibility
- *re-examine assignments and assessments for bias and exclusionary practices
- *consider changing assessments from high-stakes timed tests to projects, HW, open-note/open-book take home tests
- *ask a colleague to audit your syllabus for readings/topics/policies that are listed here
- *discuss the need to broaden participation and opportunities for people with disabilities in your department/college
- *suggested readings:
 - Armstrong, T. (2010). [*Neurodiversity: Discovering the extraordinary gifts of autism, ADHD, dyslexia, and other brain differences*](#). ProQuest Ebook Central <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>.
 - Armstrong, T. (2011). [*The power of neurodiversity: Unleashing the advantages of your differently wired brain*](#). Da Capo Lifelong Books.
 - Higashida, N. (2013). [*The reason I jump: The inner voice of a thirteen-year-old boy with autism*](#). Random House.
 - Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (1998). [Chapter 1: What is backwards design?](#) In *Understanding by design* (pp. 13-34). Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Advanced, all the previous steps plus...

- *advocate for (or lead!) professional development opportunities
- *participate in on- and off-campus events that promote disability acceptance and inclusive practices
- *model examination/reflection on your own privilege (if neurotypical and able-bodied) or experience as a person with(out) a disability
- *ask a colleague to informally observe your teaching and provide constructive feedback on your work of being an inclusive teacher
- *suggested readings:
 - Doyle, M. B., & Giangreco, M. (2013). [Guiding principles for including high school students with intellectual disabilities in general education classes](#). *American Secondary Education*, 42(1), 57–72.



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