

INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

**The information here is adapted from Cornell University's Center for Teaching Excellence.*

What is an inclusive classroom?

Teachers thoughtfully design inclusive classrooms by considering how they can allow students – who have different backgrounds, life experiences, identities, abilities, needs, and goals – to feel valued and respected.

What are the benefits of creating an inclusive classroom?

Students in an inclusive classroom experience greater levels of engagement with and connection to their instructors, classmates, and course materials. Because students are more comfortable in this environment, they are more willing to share their ideas. This act benefits them by fostering their own critical thinking skills, and it supports their classmates, who are able to encounter perspectives that may differ from and/or build upon their own. Ultimately, students in an inclusive classroom encounter greater levels of success and a sense of belonging to the classroom and college environment.

How can I teach inclusively?

- **Preparing to teach the class**
 - Be aware of your own assumptions about your students and how those might shape your interactions with them.
 - Consider how your students' backgrounds and identities impact their experiences in your classroom.
 - Create curriculum that represents diversity.

- Structure your syllabus with student success in mind; focus on the keys to excelling instead of highlighting the many means through which they might fail.
- Acknowledge your students' differences in your syllabus by including statements on diversity, on disability support services, and on mandatory reporting/Title IX.
- ***Initiating the Class***
 - As soon as possible, learn and use your students' names and pronouns.
 - Provide opportunities for students to share information about themselves with you. Consider having students write a Welcome Letter or complete a Student Information Form.
 - Create a safe space/brave space in your classroom by setting ground rules for discussions and interactions. Model respectful speech and be vigilant about maintaining it.
 - Articulate clearly how students will be graded/evaluated.
- ***Maintaining the Class***
 - Integrate strategies and activities that demonstrate your sensitivity to students' diverse learning styles, needs, and experiences.
 - Check in with your students by providing brief surveys or other opportunities for feedback. After you receive your students' responses, review and discuss the trends with them. Explain how you will use their feedback to make changes to the current procedures/calendar (i.e. more opportunities for small group discussions, additional low-stakes quizzing options, updated resources in a course shell, embedded conferences, etc.).
 - Do not assume that struggling students will come to you for help. It is okay to approach them.
 - Maintain and refer to a list of on-campus resources available to students. Consider keeping this list in a course shell so that these resources are readily accessible.
- ***Concluding the Class***
 - Have students complete an exit survey or letter including questions like these:
 - To what degree do you feel your contributions were valued in class discussion?
 - Where did you see yourself represented in our curriculum?
 - What can I do in the future to better serve students and/or help them feel more engaged?
 - What two pieces of advice would you give a friend who is taking my class next semester?
 - What was your favorite activity in this class and why?
 - What was your least favorite activity in this class and why?
 - Did you feel like you had regular opportunities to communicate with me in meaningful ways this semester? If not, how can I improve?

- We talked about diversity and inclusion often this semester. For you, what is the most important takeaway?
- If you used any of the student support services on our campus this semester, which was the most helpful? Why?
- Review students' responses and apply them to make improvements and enhancements in the future.

Are you ready for more information on inclusive classrooms?

Be sure to visit the Inclusion Resources section of the [Coast Colleges Equity, Inclusion, and Compliance](#) site for further information.

Please also see the links in the "How Can You Teach Inclusively?" section on the Cornell University Center for Teaching Excellence's document "[Inclusive Teaching Strategies](#)."