

Why Does Inclusive Teaching Matter Instructions to Instructor and Students

1. Begin by asking students what inclusive teaching is. If needed, you can prompt with statements such as “Based on the name, what do you think it is?” “What might it entail?” “What does it look like in practice in a classroom?”

2. Once students have provided examples, share a definition or two of inclusive teaching and open the discussion to include other components they may not have considered.

Example definition:

The University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning & Teaching defines inclusive teaching as: “...deliberately cultivating a learning environment where all students are treated equitably, have equal access to learning, and feel valued and supported in their learning.”

The Yale University Poorvu Center for Teaching and Learning explains: “Inclusive teaching refers to pedagogy that strives to serve the needs of all students, regardless of background or identity, and support their engagement with subject material. Hearing diverse perspectives can enrich student learning by exposing everyone to stimulating discussion, expanding approaches to traditional and contemporary issues, and situating learning within students’ own contexts while exploring those contexts.”

Example components of inclusive teaching:

- Inclusive language
- Accessible videos/audio including closed captions
- The avoiding of voiding microaggressions
- Knowing names and correctly pronouncing names
- Respecting pronouns
- Representing a variety of identities in classroom examples (images, names, stories)
- Readings from a variety of identities and perspectives
- Using assignments/activities that cater to a variety of different learning styles
- Incorporating diverse perspectives
- Avoiding tokenizing identities

Note: More examples can be found in the online resources included in the additional assignment materials.

3. Once students fully understand inclusive teaching and what it can look like in a learning environment, ask them to share the impacts or outcomes they believe can come from creating an inclusive teaching environment. Again, if prompts are needed, ask them questions such as “What would be the benefits of doing this?” or “How could a learning environment that includes these components impact student learning?”

4. Once students have again provided examples, share additional impacts that may not have been mentioned, or expand upon the examples given.

Examples of the benefits of inclusive teaching:

Note: Research suggests many of these benefits apply to a majority of students in the course, regardless of identity, background, or ability (e.g. Yale, 2021).

- Increased sense of belonging
- Decreased classroom anxiety
- Higher levels of satisfaction in the course
- Higher levels of academic achievement
- Increased understanding of content
- Increased motivation and retention
- Personal growth
- Increased self-esteem
- More interactions between students and students and instructor
- Reduced prejudice

Note: More examples can be found in the online resources included in the additional assignment materials.

5. Finally, ask students to step outside of their own experience and consider how inclusive teaching strategies impact identities beyond their own. For example, “What would it feel like to feel left out of classroom examples?” Or “How would it be more difficult to succeed if the readings or videos were not available in a format you could consume?”

6. Optionally, ask students to complete a self-reflection on what they learning during the activity.