Promoting Classroom Inclusivity Guide

Co-Authored by the USC Writing Program’s MLL Support Committee*

-------------------------------INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM VALUES-------------------------------

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----------------------HOW TO CREATE AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM----------------------

**Step 1: Acknowledge + Reframe**

⇒ **Acknowledge conscious, subconscious, and unconscious bias** and promote perspective consciousness (awareness of the limitations of our own experiences and views).

⇒ **Actively challenge our assumptions** (about students’ identities, backgrounds, performance, and capabilities as well as our practices, regardless of past perceptions of success or effectiveness) and encourage students to do the same.

⇒ **Challenge socio-linguistic hierarchies** (such as Standard Written English) and shift focus to audience and context.

**Step 2: Model + Engage**

⇒ **Create an environment where respect is paramount** and accountability is required.

⇒ **Lead with openness, understanding, and compassion**, and model how to do this for students.

⇒ **Model identity acknowledgements through offering a “positionality statement,”** wherein instructors disclose their identities, aiming to create acceptance of a diverse

*Co-Authors: Pamela Albanese, Emily Artiano, Laurie Fisher, Amanda Hobmeier, Taiyaba Husain, Jessi Johnson, Stephanie Payne, & Corinna Schroeder*
mosaic of identities to co-exist in the learning space.

⇒ Show the value of diverse perspectives and model this through reading and topic selection.

⇒ Pay attention to each student as an individual—to their identity and background, to their unique performance and progress, to their specific goals for the semester.

⇒ Create spaces for quiet and introverted students to participate—to speak and to be heard—while remembering that participation is not just about talking.

⇒ Work to create an inclusive classroom community in which students listen and respond to each other.

⇒ Change from a “product-oriented” system/way of thinking to an “idea-oriented” environment.

⇒ Diminish hierarchies in a discussion-based class, aiming over time to have students talk more than the instructor.

⇒ Utilize silence more often in the classroom to help 1) elicit more student responses and to 2) enable the instructor to respond thoughtfully and to assess/attend to their own biases.

Step 3: Activate + Empower

⇒ Explore constructs of privilege and interrogate the systems that sustain them.

⇒ Provide opportunities for students to bring their expertise, languages, cultures, and experiences into their writing.

⇒ Create identity-based curricula to build community through language inclusion and code-meshing.

⇒ Utilize translingualism to demonstrate identity, heritage, and clarity of message.

⇒ Encourage code-meshing as a world English and as a tool for equity in written discourse.

⇒ Create class community values through celebrating diverse paths of language acquisition.

⇒ Build student confidence by seeking to create assignments—both formal and informal—that allow students to use experiential evidence to convey points.

⇒ Make multicultural readings and examples central components of assignments.

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Carve out spaces throughout assignment cycles in which students can share their work (small groups, peer editing, presentations), so that the multicultural focus is central to class discussion.

---------SUPPORTING APPROACHES FOR YOUR INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM---------

*Establish Your Own Classroom Values Within Inclusivity*

- Establish classroom community values collaboratively and continue to reiterate the classroom as a community.

- Focus on commonalities and shared values and goals, when possible (you can even use a visual aid like overlapping and moving concentric circles with Discourse Communities we belong to—the classroom is a good start).

- Upend the idea of rules and “right”/“wrong” in academic writing: talk about choices writers can make and their possible effects on readers; help students discover/hone their agency and voice as writers and thinkers.

- Acknowledge that international students may want to learn about American culture; explore parallels that may exist between structures of oppression and prejudice—topics such as race and class in U.S. provide a space for reflection and comparison for some students, and criticizing the government may be an uncomfortable idea—some students may not take it lightly.

- Show that diversity is an asset by encouraging students to draw from personal experience and cultural background in both low stakes and high stakes modes—blurring the boundary between these modes can also enhance development of voice.

- Create an atmosphere of inclusivity that acknowledges the degree to which socioeconomic class influences a sense of belongingness on campus and consider how this translates into action. For example, not making assumptions about access to transportation, technology, cultural capital, etc.

*Align Your Classroom Practices With Those Values of Inclusivity*

- Shift classroom practices to student-centered.

- Consciously mediate discussions with established goals on your part; these can be shared with students depending on your goals; transparency can be very useful at times.

- Engage with relevant current issues and events (This can be student-led).

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o **Emphasize voice as subjective**: promote the idea that the individual voice (that weaves perspective with authority) is more compelling than a generic, impersonal voice.

o **Create activities and assignments that have components of critical self-reflection**.

o **Facilitate peer work that takes into account difference, and the benefits of difference**.

o **Role-Play and take on positions of “stakeholders”** to promote students moving away from their own, often limited, perspectives (This can be engaged in Peer Response activities).

o **Model inclusivity through diverse reading and topic selection**: use diverse models of both published and student work.

o **Highlight audience, context, genre, and purpose to explore unique approaches** to class work and assignments.

o **Change punitive rubrics to “reward-based” ones and have students create the rubric with you** (especially if you pare down the rubric categories to be broader).

o **Create rotating small groups** so students get to work with/learn from different classmates.

o **Employ different forms of discussion and collaboration**: from oral small group discussions to “silent discussions” that occur through writing to collaborative group work on Google Docs.

o **Balance modeling practices with dismantling hierarchical classroom structures**: give students autonomy to boost confidence, provide opportunities for them to guide others and nurture their own writing practice.