

## Building an Inclusive Climate in Your Classroom

An inclusive classroom climate embraces diversity and creates an atmosphere of respect for all members of the KU community. Here are some strategies that can help to promote a sense of belonging, validation, and mutual respect in our classrooms:

<b>Strategies and Examples of Specific Actions</b>
<p><b>Make your classroom inspiring for underrepresented students.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss the contributions of diverse scholars. Provide role models from a range of cultures, races, and genders to convey that everyone can be successful.</li> <li>• Avoid implicitly (or explicitly) activating stereotypes about marginalized groups.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Include diversity and disabilities statements on your syllabus</b> (see reverse).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite students to speak with you about accommodations for disabilities, or conflicts due to religious observances.</li> <li>• For group assignments, acknowledge that some students will need to schedule around work or religious commitments on weekends.</li> <li>• Refer to breaks by their seasonal names (e.g., “winter break”).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Establish guidelines and goals for classroom interactions</b> (see reverse).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frame the conversation by identifying a clear purpose, objectives, and discussion prompts.</li> <li>• Set ground rules or “learning contracts” in which students spell out responsibilities and expectations for themselves and for you- consider collaborating with students on these.</li> <li>• Highlight the importance of respecting others’ perspectives, avoiding generalizations, and being careful not to ask others to ‘represent’ a group you perceive them to belong to.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Build rapport and community in your class.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use icebreakers throughout the semester- activities related to course goals that encourage students to share from their individual experience.</li> <li>• Incorporate peer learning (e.g., students work in pairs or groups); create diverse teams to avoid isolating underrepresented students or creating homogenous groups.</li> <li>• Ask students to reflect on how their learning is enhanced by interaction with classmates (e.g., “What did you learn from someone else in today’s class?”).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Reflect on your own background and experiences and ask students to do the same.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider how your own background and cultural influences might affect your teaching. Does the material provide an accurate representation of various perspectives?</li> <li>• Where appropriate to course material, ask <b>all</b> students to think about how their experience has been shaped by their identities (or share yours), not just under-represented students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Create a positive climate for difficult discussions, and scaffold the discussions.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage contentious interactions by setting aside personal reactions and treating hot moments as learning opportunities</li> <li>• Ask students to try to <i>understand</i> other perspectives before reacting (e.g., listen, ask questions, restate other view before offering own, argue for position with which they most disagree).</li> <li>• Be an active facilitator (reword questions, correct misinformation, reference relevant material)</li> <li>• <i>Include everyone</i> through think-pair-shares, small group discussions or reflective writing.</li> <li>• Save time at the end of the discussion to summarize it, and gather student feedback (e.g., a “minute” reflection paper)</li> <li>• If an impromptu discussion gets too heated too fast, consider <i>taking a break</i> (or deferring to the next class period) to address pre-emptive strategies suggested for prepared discussions.</li> </ul>

See <http://cte.ku.edu/resources-inclusive-teaching> for more information.

## Sample Syllabus Statements on Diversity, Inclusion, and Civility

The instructor considers this classroom to be a place where you will be treated with respect as a human being – regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, gender identity, political beliefs, age, or ability. Additionally, diversity of thought is appreciated and encouraged, provided you can agree to disagree. It is the instructor’s expectation that ALL students experience this classroom as a safe environment.

The University of Kansas supports an inclusive learning environment in which diversity and individual differences are understood, respected, and appreciated. We believe that all students benefit from training and experiences that will help them to learn, lead, and serve in an increasingly diverse society. All members of our campus community must accept the responsibility to demonstrate civility and respect for the dignity of others. Expressions or actions that disparage a person’s or group’s race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, gender, gender identity / expression, religion, sexual orientation, age, veteran status, or disability are contrary to the mission of the University. We expect that KU students, faculty, and staff will promote an atmosphere of respect for all members of our KU community.

Civility and respect for the opinions of others are very important in an academic environment. It is likely you may not agree with everything that is said or discussed in the classroom. Courteous behavior and responses are expected at all times. When you disagree with someone, be sure that you make a distinction between criticizing an idea and criticizing the person. Expressions or actions that disparage a person’s or race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, gender, gender identity/expression, religion, sexual orientation, age, disability, or marital, parental, or veteran status are contrary to the mission of this course and will not be tolerated.

## Sample Ground Rules

### **Principles for Constructive Engagement, Adapted from *Is Everyone Really Equal? An Introduction to Key Concepts in Social Justice Education*. Edited by James A. Banks.**

1. You don’t know what you don’t know. Strive for Intellectual Humility.
2. Everyone has an opinion. Opinions are not the same as informed knowledge.
3. Let go of personal anecdotal evidence and look at broader societal patterns.
4. Notice your own defensive reactions, and attempt to use these reactions as entry points for gaining deeper self-knowledge.
5. Recognize how your social positionality (such as your own race, class, gender, sexuality, ability-status) informs your reactions to class material and to others in the class.

### **From the University of Michigan Center for Research on Teaching and Learning Website.**

1. Respect others’ rights to hold opinions and beliefs that differ from your own. Challenge or criticize the idea, not the person.
2. Listen carefully to what others are saying even when you disagree with what is being said. Comments that you make (asking for clarification, sharing critiques, expanding on a point, etc.) should reflect that you have paid attention to the speaker’s comments.
3. Be courteous. Don’t interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.
4. Support your statements. Use evidence and provide a rationale for your points.
5. Allow everyone the chance to talk. If you have much to say, try to hold back a bit; if you are hesitant to speak, look for opportunities to contribute to the discussion.
6. If you are offended by something or think someone else might be, speak up and don't leave it for someone else to have to respond to it.

For more examples like this see <http://crlt.umich.edu/node/58410>.