

The ideal successful classroom will represent its students and prepare them all for their futures. To ensure this is a reality for all students, it is necessary for teachers to prioritize that diversity, equity and inclusion be at the heart of what they do. This is an easy enough concept to understand and believe in, but I am committed to creating concrete plans for establishing my classroom as a safe place for all students to learn. Part of this important work is personal to me; that starts with the ability to self-identify. My most impactful educators have not been the ones who were most like me: a common thread between my most beloved high school teachers was their shared genuine authenticity. By being themselves wholeheartedly, these teachers made it comfortable for students to be themselves and broach conversations that previously felt uncomfortable like race, gender, and socio-economic status. This felt especially impactful at my Catholic preparatory school where teachers had an added level of censorship. It felt empowering to have a few teachers who had reasonable expectations of my maturity and empathy. This will be something I carry into my classroom.

My identity as a white cis-gendered woman will surely affect my role as a teacher in many ways. I only know what it is like to be a white student and even so, my experience was not representative of all white students in the United States. Because of this, I will always welcome students' perspectives about our classroom, the material we study and the way we study it. One of my driving philosophies as a teacher will be the acceptance of each student in their own right and an appreciation for their serious efforts. I think this is supported by the pedagogical approach *constructivism* but I am well aware that constructivism is not an end all be all solution to teaching. (Nieto & Bode, 126) It will be necessary to implement learning styles "congruent" (Cultural Humility) to students' learning styles at home. This is just one small part of the larger

anti-racist perspective I will continue to build upon as a teacher. It is vital for educators to have

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not only a “multicultural” perspective, but an even deeper anti-racist one. An anti-racist/anti biased perspective necessitates treating your students as young adults and teaching from the context of how things actually are and not from a framework of how things should be. Seemingly obvious, my classroom will be a place that acknowledges and discusses societal constructs as they affect my students, their friends and families, and the way they relate to one another. Students’ roles as members of society will be up for open discussion in class. Students deserve to be told the truth in an age appropriate manner.

As a proud vocabulary nerd, **diversity** is a fabulous term to me because the definition is a bit endless in a meta way. Merriam Webster defines it as “the condition of having or being composed of differing elements; variety” (Webster). Just like in the definition of the word **diversity**, in my classroom, the word “differing” will carry a neutral connotation – not a negative one. It will be important to be to implement a rule for myself and my students like one at the Mark Day School: that we can disagree with one another, but we cannot ridicule, hurt or attack each other over disagreements. In tactical ways, this will include creating a classroom culture of accountability and actively listening to one another; potentially providing a “talking ball” if too many interruptions arise. **Equity** will be parallel to my students’ success in class. I will, to the best of my abilities, with the resources I have, provide each student with the tools necessary to reach the same level of academic excellence in my class. **Equity** is, in part, my own acknowledgement, acceptance and embracement of the fact that different students will need different tools at different times. Tools that I can provide one student may not work for another student. Finding the tools that work for each student will benefit my entire class. Lastly,

inclusion to me can be defined as, *the result of effective diversity and equity practices*. Inclusion cannot exist in a classroom without democracy. I will continue to define these terms throughout

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my statement by highlighting ways I will prioritize them in my classroom. I would like to call out that the equitable teaching strategies listed may suite one student or group of students better than another. My over-arching equitable teaching strategy will be built upon the ability to pivot my own lessons, expectations, plans and texts to fit the needs of each of my students. Equitable teaching strategies listed below will be the specific ways I work towards this over-arching goal.

My first equitable practice in my classroom will be an intentional contextualization and reframing of school/district/state-provided information. I have recently decided to pursue credentials to teach Social Science in addition to credentials to teach English. My observation work in a Language Arts & Social Science hybrid class has been no small part of this. I have already been brainstorming about the ways I will frame history textbooks from a real-world construct. I will ask students questions like, “whose perspective does this seem to be written from?” and “whose perspective is missing?” I will supply supplemental information from the people and perspectives that are historically left out and underrepresented (BIPOC, members of the LGBTQ+ community, women etc....). This will be an equitable teaching practice because it will provide a more unbiased framework that will ideally include perspectives representative of each student’s family, culture, and language. Additionally, this practice will give students the opportunity to engage in larger conversations that involve, “major concepts, big ideas, and general principles rather than isolated facts.” (Nieto & Bode, 125) An over-arching question that was posed in EDU 5010 that I will bring into my classroom is, “how does who you are shape what you know about the world?” This feeds into my important self-identification work for

equitable teaching. My self-identifying will give me a better chance to get to know my students, their culture, their families, their language, their identities and how these parts of them make up the background knowledge they bring into the classroom. It is important to note that two students

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may have fairly similar background knowledge but require two totally different things from me to succeed.

My next equitable teaching practice will be family based. I will put an emphasis on knowing the parents or guardians of my students in a way that allows us to come together for the student. I will welcome guardians' insights and opinions on their child's education. I will welcome these insights as reason to believe that all of my students have adults who want the best for them in their education. Inspired by Gender Spectrum's registration forms, I will have inclusive registration forms for students and parents to assert a safe place for the family. Ideally, this will include various forms for language preference as well. Additionally, I will be sure to be an expert on what family and social welfare programs my school and district are a part of and supply this information in a universal context to all families rather than a case by case basis. I also am confident that by knowing the family well, it will give me greater insight to the student, their toolset, and their background knowledge. Being comfortable and confident interacting with different linguistic styles and languages will be key to this. Though I will not be able to communicate effectively in every language, I will make my greatest effort in the way of studying key phrases and words before meeting with parents for better understanding. I will communicate with all parents/guardians in person and also follow up in written word. This will foster accountability on my end and will enable us the flexibility of translating when we need to.

My final equitable teaching strategy will deeply relate to my goal of academic excellence

for my students by making the classroom an inclusive space for all. This includes the physical classroom as well as the community. To achieve this, it will start with my own beliefs, biases, and attitudes by actively believing in the ability and success of each of my students.

Additionally, this will be a big part of my self-identification work in the classroom, for example,

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supplying pronouns and asking for others' and using gender neutral language and grouping. I will be in close contact with my school's occupational therapy department so that when I have worries, I can call on them for guidance. This relationship will be paramount for making a physically safe and effective learning environment for students with disabilities.

Additionally, I will make strides to remove some antiquated high stakes competition from my classroom. In Affirming Diversity, Nieto and Bode note that, "... the most prevalent classroom approaches stress individual achievement and extrinsic motivation. These includes ability grouping, testing of all kinds, and rote learning." (124) This stuck out to me as a student who often "placed in the bottom half" of most of my classes through school. This mentality gave me little to no motivation and I did not consider myself a good student until I was in college and had agency over my education. This impacts me as a teacher because it makes a safe and effective learning environment for everyone a personal priority. Creating the safe space will include student involvement as I will ask them to collectively create a DEI statement for our own class that includes guidelines to respect and the potential consequences for not doing so. I will welcome my students' input and collaboration so that they too feel a sense of agency and ownership over their education. This work will allow students to set classroom boundaries that they can feel secure in.

I hope to center my teaching around the class as a community. Framing our classroom as a

community endeavor rather than a personal one will include active work on my part to create meaningful collaborations by grouping students in diverse and various collections with one another. Community centered work will prepare the students for adult life and being a part of many different groups comprised of diverse kinds of people. This also creates the opportunity to deal with issues like bullying as a community issue rather than an individual one which is an

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essential part of restorative justice. (C.R.J) A community approach will be beneficial emotionally and academically. A way my mentor teacher at S.J.M.S has effectively made her class' academic success a team endeavor is their quiz format. The same quiz is given three times, the first two are graded as a class average and only the final quiz is an individual score. This is effective for students who thrive in collaboration as well as students who prefer to work on their own. It gives proper preparation for success and it gives students two different scenarios from which to succeed at the same end goal or task.

Right up there with diversity, equity and inclusion, *empathy and accountability* will be at the core of my teaching and this is directly intertwined with my work as an anti-racist, anti biased teacher. The anchor standards and domains provided by Teaching Tolerance were deeply moving to me in this regard. I believe that humans in general do the best they can with the tools they have, and I include students in this sentiment. Teaching Tolerance's ability to categorize these standards in terms of identity, diversity, justice and finally, by action highlighted children's inherent ability to be accountable and empathetic, but these qualities must be shown to one's self first. The world will be lucky to have a group of young people who care deeply about themselves and others. In 1960, my grandmother filled out a questionnaire from the school she was teaching. A question asked, "What kind of discipline or control do you like to see in a classroom?" My

grandmother responded, “Democratic – with boundaries set by the group so that everyone understands them and knows that they must be taken seriously.” I think this sums up my hope in one sentence. I will ensure my students feel empowered, respected, and understood in my class.

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