The Equity Centered Classroom: Syllabi ReDesign

Facilitated By
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Facilitator’s Starting Points

- There will be more questions than answers.
- **This is an ongoing learning process.**
- We are equals/peers in this learning space, working together for student success.
- **Our values, cultural identities, and past experiences matter ... They are in the room!**
- Conflict is always possible, and conflict is OK when addressed from the heart.
- **We are all prejudiced; prejudice is learned and can be unlearned.**
- We are here to *learn* from each other.
The Four-Fold Way: Our Community Agreements

The Four-Fold Way: Walking the Paths of the Warrior, Teacher, Healer, and Visionary By Angeles Arrien

1. **Show up**, or choose to be present.
2. **Pay attention** to what has heart and meaning.
3. **Tell the truth** without blame or judgment.
4. **Don’t be attached to the results**; stay open to outcome, not attached to it.
This session will focus on creating inclusive and welcoming environments. We will explore this topic through the first touch-point: the syllabus.

Learn strategies, practices, and tools to demonstrate a culture of caring, increase students’ sense of belonging, and types aligning the syllabus with the larger goal of students success for all.

Practice using a syllabus review tool.
"Mindfulness means paying attention in a particular way; On purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally."

Jon Kabat-Zinn
Mindfulness is awareness cultivated through meditation and other mind-body practices to regulate and shape our attention and emotions.

**AUTOPilot**

Automatic thoughts & feelings trigger unhelpful habits of mind & lead us to react in unskillful ways.

stimulus ➞ reaction

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**MINDFULNESS**

Mindful awareness disrupts automatic tendencies to create space to choose a different response.

stimulus ➞ mindfulness ➞ response

Mindfulness trains our minds, which over time, trains our brains.

**PROVEN BENEFITS**

- Reduces stress & anxiety
- Improves mood & working memory
- Prevents relapse of depression
- Increases emotional intelligence
- Develops awareness & resilience
**Equity** is defined as “the state, quality or ideal of being just, impartial and fair.”

*The concept of equity is synonymous with fairness and justice.*

It is helpful to think of equity as not simply a desired state of affairs or a lofty value. To be achieved and sustained, equity needs to be thought of as a structural and systemic concept.

- The Annie Casey Foundation
Othering is a generalized set of common processes that denies someone’s full humanity based or them being less than and/or a threat to the favorite group.
At the fundamental level, all languages have ways of distinguishing between “them” and “us”; these very pronouns highlight the distinction between the groups. As the first person plural pronoun, “us” places the speaker within a group with a shared identity. By contrast, “them” is the third person plural, which is used to refer to people at a distance. In their denotation, their meaning, the words “us” and “them” contain no indication of power structures or perceptions of these groups. However, the power of words does not just derive from their definitions, but also from the connotations that they acquire through usage.
The opposite of Othering is *not* saming but belonging.
What Is Belonging?

“Belonging is being part of a collective *we*. It’s about how much we believe we *fit* in a group or place – and how much that place or group welcomes or includes us. It’s the result of connecting with others in rich relationships and engaging in our communities to make them better. Belonging is fundamental to our sense of happiness and well-being.

Each of us has a personal connection to the idea of belonging that is influenced by our experiences with the people, places and identities to which we feel connected. So where do we belong? What do we belong to? A community, a workplace, a specific culture group – these are all things to which we may belong.”

Belonging Matters!

- Belonging is linked to better academic, psychological, and health outcomes...

- About **25 percent** of students are classified as having a low sense of belonging...

- **Teacher support** is one of the **strongest predictors** of having a sense of belonging in school...

- Emotional support from teachers is linked to Social Emotional Learning (SEL) development in students...

Adapted from John A. Powell
EXCLUSION  INTEGRATION  BELONGING

Adapted from john a. powell
LEARNING IS PROFOUNDLY SOCIAL

A positive environment that supports a sense of belonging is key to student success

CHANGE THE QUESTION

Why do these students have poor social and emotional capacities?  
How can we ensure our school climate leads to the healthy development of each student?

SCHOOLWIDE ACTIONS

Take a schoolwide approach to SEL that includes policies and practices that foster a positive climate, such as replacing punitive or exclusionary discipline with restorative justice or positive behavioral interventions and supports2

Provide educators with training on emotional intelligence, mindfulness, and resilience to stress and trauma2

Encourage teachers to engage in perspective-taking to better understand students’ experiences and the negative feelings that may lead to misbehavior

Structure dynamic group work in which small groups jointly solve a problem in ways that encourage cooperation3

Have, communicate, and support high expectations for all your students2

Use mindfulness practices to reduce your exhaustion and stress4

Have teachers and administrators who reflect the diversity of your students7

Adopt strong anti-bullying policies to promote inclusively and improve school safety for marginalized students6

Use culturally responsive practices to promote a sense of belonging in students from traditionally underserved groups6

Encourage students to focus on mastery rather than performance goals. Call upon a classroom in which mistakes are understood to be part of learning, effort is valued, and students learn to appreciate challenges and hard work5

Noticing students who don’t seem to feel comfortable in the school? Here are actions you can take.

First Touch Point: Equity-Centered Syllabus

With your group, you will:

• **Review the document.** What do you see? How does it make you feel? What is most strongly communicated (i.e., belief in student success, implications that rules will be broken, or the value of inclusion and respect)

• **Reflect on the document.** What is the potential impact on student success? What communicates shared power and respectful engagement? What reinforces student-centeredness and commitment to student success?

• **Dialogue on the document.** Without judgement, share your personal experience of the syllabus and how you think a student may interpret or experience the document. What was missing? What worked well? What could be enhanced?

• **Consider concrete application or ideas for a more equitized syllabus.** With your team, brainstorm suggestions for a more equity-centered syllabus, for the most marginalized students in particular.

This activity inspired by the University of Southern California, Center for Urban Education Rossier School of Education syllabus review protocol.
Drop Policy: Any student who has stopped doing the assignments has the responsibility to officially drop the class either on-line, by phone, or in the Admissions and Records office. Failure to officially drop may result in the student receiving a grade of “F”. The policy is that an instructor has the right to drop any student who has one weeks’ worth of class absent at any time throughout the semester up to the drop deadline (the student must never assume that the instructor will do so). In this distance online course I will drop any student who has not completed one weeks’ worth of assignments listed under Course Map (Week 1, 2, 3, etc.), or failed to comply with the instructions of the instructor for missed material, or has not met the hours required of the course. February 20th is the last day to drop without a W, and May 7th is the last day to drop with a W.
Drop Policy:

Per college guidelines a student can be dropped if one weeks’ worth of class attendance is missed. I understand taking online courses and juggling life may be tough. To help you manage your time, I have provided you with the course calendar. However, if an unforeseen circumstance arises and you miss material, please contact me and let me know so we can figure out a plan for you to get back on track. Our common goal here is to help you successfully pass the course. If you stop participating with the course material and don’t inform me, I may drop you. You also have the option to drop the course yourself, if you choose to stop participating. February 20th is the last day to drop without a W, and May 7th is the last day to drop with a W.
Mobile-Friendly Liquid Syllabus

https://youtu.be/90BmvCuXMoI
Mobile-Friendly Liquid Syllabus

Legal Aspects of Real Estate

Syllabus

This is a fully online course.

West Los Angeles College | RE 005, Section 11214 | Online | August 26 – December 15, 2019

https://sites.google.com/view/dr-porter-re-005-f19/home
Supporting Adult Learners

- Adults bring a wide range of personal and professional experiences to each new learning situation.
- Adults have a problem-solving orientation.
- Adults can be a valuable resource for one another.
- Adults lead busy, frenetic lives.
- Adults often have fixed viewpoints and entrenched habits.
- Adults are affected by the aging process.
- Adults have a deep need to be self-directing.
- Adults want to be treated with dignity and respect.

Rooted In Equity

• **Branches:** How will you integrate today’s learning into your equity work?

• **Trunk:** How will you internalize or integrate equity throughout your work with colleagues and students?

• **Roots:** How will you help ensure your team will stay connected to these desired outcomes and a commitment to equity?
Final Harvest

❖ Q&A
❖ Next Steps
❖ Appreciations
Our team wants to help create an equitized world; a world where everyone and every aspect of our individual and collective identities are embraced, celebrated, and centered.

We work toward building an equitized world one person, one team, and one system at a time. We offer supportive-guidance, coaching, workshops and resources for organizations committed to internalizing and institutionalizing the frameworks of cultural humility, equity literacy, and intersectional praxis.

We are humbled and honored to join you as an ally along your path!

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