Steps Toward Creating a More Accessible and Inclusive Classroom
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Start here...
*realize that many individuals view their disability as an asset, not a deficit
*recognize that disability is often defined by the environment an individual is in
*make sure you are not making ableist statements in the classroom
*avoid negative descriptions of disability (ex: “suffers from a condition,” “confined/bound to a wheelchair”)
*use person-first language rather than disability-first language (ex: “student with a learning disability,” not “learning disabled student”), unless an individual discloses that they prefer to use identity-first language (for example: some individuals on the autism spectrum may prefer to call themselves “autistic” rather than “a person with autism”; someone may identify as part of the Deaf community)
*realize that impact matters, regardless of intention
*do not assume students with disabilities are less capable or lacking knowledge/skills
*do not be surprised when your students with diverse needs are successful
*tell a colleague that you are committing to the work of being a more inclusive educator

Beginning
*add literature/resources from neurodiverse and diverse authors to assigned course readings and class activities
*replace and/or supplement outdated readings
*provide electronic files of reading, resources, presentations, and other materials
*be willing to answer student questions, even those that seem repetitive
*understand that all behavior is a function, or indicative of something else going on; ask if students need support rather than punish them
*syllabus to include Statement from the Disability Resource Office, Statement on Academic Diversity, Religious Observance Policy, and CARE resources
*create community guidelines for discussion that includes intention and impact/anti-bias language
*immediately address ableist/biased remarks in the classroom through discussion
*syllabus to include statement of Classroom Environment that encourages regard for others and respects free speech while not tolerating hate speech
*when presenting visuals/images, also provide a description of the image
*always provide Closed Captioning on posted videos (lectures, resources, etc.)
*incorporate impact and perspective of groups of diverse abilities in policies of the past and present
*encourage students (and ourselves as faculty) to analyze research and articles to ensure they represent the perspectives of marginalized groups, follow up with questioning why and providing additional resources
*promote self-advocacy
*suggested readings:
Intermediate, all the beginning steps plus...

* check out the CCE’s YouTube channel for video resources on Disability and Accessibility
* syllabus revisions to include adding Student Learning Objectives, Essential Questions, and Course Descriptions related to advocacy/inclusion/preparing students to be agents of change
* examine syllabus to make sure policies (late work, absence, participation grades, etc.) do not indirectly or directly target students with disabilities OR demonstrate bias toward neurotypical students (for example: a “cameras on” Zoom policy may disproportionately punish students who require accommodations or have diverse learning needs; deductions for late work may punish students who need flexibility due to medical or mental health needs; requiring students to disclose personal details in order to receive extensions or incompletes disrespects students’ privacy of health and disability needs)
* be willing to adjust your expectations through flexibility
* re-examine assignments and assessments for bias and exclusionary practices
* consider changing assessments from high-stakes timed tests to projects, HW, open-note/open-book take home tests
* ask a colleague to audit your syllabus for readings/topics/policies that are listed here
* discuss the need to broaden participation and opportunities for people with disabilities in your department/college
* suggested readings:
  
  
  
  

Advanced, all the previous steps plus...

* advocate for (or lead!) professional development opportunities
* participate in on- and off-campus events that promote disability acceptance and inclusive practices
* model examination/reflection on your own privilege (if neurotypical and able-bodied) or experience as a person with(out) a disability
* ask a colleague to informally observe your teaching and provide constructive feedback on your work of being an inclusive teacher
* suggested readings:
  