

Reflect on Your Sense of Belonging Practices

This resource is a part of the Annual Inclusive Classroom Training (AY21-22) pre-workshop module and CELT facilitated program for academic departments. These practices for creating a sense of belonging are a part of research-based inclusive teaching principles (<https://bit.ly/reflect-itp>). By engaging in these practices, you can further explore inclusive teaching through conversation with colleagues, consultation with CELT, or reading in relevant scholarship. For background, see CELT's Foster a Sense of Belonging page (<http://bit.ly/celt-belonging>).

Step 1. Before or after the facilitated program: Extend your learning

Reflect upon your teaching practice, do you or would you use any of the following?

√ = I regularly or sometimes use this or a similar strategy in my teaching (mark with a checkmark)

X = I do not or would not use this in my teaching / this is not applicable in my setting (mark with a letter X)

☆ = I would like to try this, though I may need more information or resources (mark with a star)

Step 2. During the facilitated program: Briefly scan the practices

1. Communicate high expectations and your belief that all students can succeed.
2. Download and consider using CELT's Mindful and Learner-Centered Syllabus (PDF) (<http://bit.ly/celtsyllabus>).
3. Learn and use students' names and pronouns (if they share them with you). For example, a student may share, "In this class, I would like to use the name [insert name] and referred to with she/her/hers pronouns." Make note of it for your records being mindful that this is no different from someone going by a middle name or asking to be "Joseph" instead of "Joe." What do you do, or could you do, to get to know your students?
4. Build rapport in the class through regular icebreakers, small group activities, collaborative thinking, etc.
5. Develop guidelines or community agreements about interactions during class. Include the ISU Principles of Community (<https://www.iastate.edu/principles>) and the Netiquette at ISU (<https://bit.ly/isu-netiquette>). Reflect upon them with students at strategically throughout the term; revise them when applicable.
6. Assess students' prior knowledge about your field and topics to align instruction with their strengths/needs. For example, when introducing a new topic, ask students to reflect on what they already know about the subject or invite them to identify the relevant skills they bring from different domains.
7. Encourage or require students to visit student (office) hours early in the term and use that time to ask about their interests and experiences with course material.
8. Communicate concern for your students' well-being, and share information about campus resources (e.g., Student Wellness, Student Counseling Services, Student Accessibility Services) (<https://bit.ly/celt-student>).
9. Deliberately avoid generalizations that may exclude students who are already experiencing marginalization on campus. These are often communicated through phrases (e.g., "when you go home for Thanksgiving," "if you have a child someday," "just walk over to my office," "it only costs \$xxx") that make implicit assumptions about students' physical ability, family structure, social identities, citizenship status, or economic means.

- ___ 10. Cultivate growth mindsets: Allow for productive trial and error (e.g., through low-stakes practice quizzes, drafting opportunities, modeling, or discussing interestingly productive wrong answers). Emphasize that risk, struggle, and failure can be important parts of any learning process and/or scientific method.
- ___ 11. When content coverage is in tension with responding to student learning needs, prioritize student learning needs (e.g., be willing to adjust lecture pace, reduce information on slides, make course materials available to students for study and exam preparation, share essential study skill tips, etc.).
- ___ 12. Design course policies that provide clear pathways if students need to be absent, turn in work late, leave class early, etc. Explain you designed the course to support student learning when unforeseen circumstances arise; avoid framing such policies as simply punitive.
- ___ 13. Highlight the diversity of contributors to your discipline (through the authors you assign, the research you highlight, the guests you invite to meet with your students, etc.), and/or facilitate a discussion about the reasons for a history of limited access to the field and current efforts to change it.
- ___ 14. When inviting outside critics or speakers, seek to identify professionals who bring diverse backgrounds, including identities different from yours. Also, prepare visitors to contribute to the inclusive environment of your course (e.g., share the Principles of Community, community agreements, accessibility needs, etc.).
- ___ 15. When possible, assign student groups or provide criteria for student-formed groups/teams that help leverage diversity and avoid isolating students from underrepresented identities.
- ___ 16. At the beginning of group work, create a process for students to discuss their respective strengths, personal learning goals, anticipated contributions, etc. See CELT's Group Work page (<https://bit.ly/celt-group-work>).
- ___ 17. Create intentional opportunities for students to provide feedback on their learning environment experience and share ideas for improving it. This assessment could include short anonymous polls, check-ins at the beginning of a class meeting, or more substantial written feedback opportunities. See CELT's Use formative course feedback from students (<http://bit.ly/isu-plusdelta>).
- ___ 18. Share a basic needs statement in your syllabus and repeat it throughout the semester, "To learn effectively, you must have basic security: a roof over your head along with a reliable place to sleep and enough food to eat (view the Food Security at ISU Student Wellness page, <https://bit.ly/foodsecurity-isu>). If you're having trouble with any of those things, please talk with me, your academic advisor, or the Dean of Students Office (email studentassistance@iastate.edu, phone 515-294-1020). Together we can work to meet those needs."

Step 3. Inform your inclusive classroom action plan

What other ways do I help facilitate my students' sense of belonging in my class, discipline, or professional field? What else could I do? What are my next steps?

What can I do in my course *this week or semester* to make it more inclusive to help facilitate my students' sense of belonging?

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