

10 TIPS: BECOMING AN INTERCULTURALLY INCLUSIVE EDUCATOR

What are the benefits of adopting a more interculturally inclusive approach in my classroom?

The benefits of adopting inclusive intercultural strategies in the classroom are:

- ✓ **Connecting** with students to improve both learning and teaching engagement
- ✓ **Creating** a sense of belonging in the classroom (important when considering aspects of student retention)
- ✓ **Improving** student comfort levels in the class to then facilitate better discussion, questioning etc.
- ✓ **Developing** a respectful working culture in the classroom (minimising any classroom management challenges).

HOW DO I BECOME A MORE INTERCULTURALLY INCLUSIVE EDUCATOR?

As seen in the resource *Considerations: An intercultural approach to learning and teaching* an intercultural approach is evidenced through strategic design of curriculum, tasks and activities, as well as supported and facilitated interactions in the classroom. Further, through the modelling of a culturally inclusive ethos that characterises the classroom, and in so doing, the discipline. Such a responsive classroom provides an opportunity for each member to reflect on and engage with diversity and to work in a collegiate way. In this way, the classroom reflects those attributes that commonly define global citizenship.

TEN TIPS

1. **Consider your students.** Think about who your students are and their motivation for undertaking the unit/course. In so doing, consider the ways in which your teaching might respond to students' own learning journeys.
2. **Reflect on your own teaching approaches and philosophy.** In reflecting on your own teaching approach and philosophy of teaching, you will see that these are shaped by your own experiences and sense of your role as an educator. Distance yourself in order to view the discipline and the teaching from various perspectives. This will provide an opportunity

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to reflect on how best to ensure that principles of diversity define the learning and teaching experience in your classroom.

3. **Identify any culture bound terminology** used in the discipline as represented by the discipline. This is often evidenced in lectures, readings, tutorial discussions, resources used e.g. YouTube clips etc. Consider what strategies might be used to unpack these terms and ensure students become familiar with their usage, if appropriate. You might make this into a fun activity through peer-based discussions, use apps such as [kahoot.it](https://www.kahoot.it) etc.
4. **Culturally framed concepts, notions and ideas.** Consider the materials being presented for culturally nuanced notions e.g. the notion of a classroom management strategy may be quite acceptable for preservice teachers in the Education field, but unfamiliar to students who have come from an educational experience in a country where such documents were not 'needed'. Create a critical thinking activity around it e.g. ask the students to identify the culturally nuanced concept and explain why it has come about and how it might be interpreted. At this point, you might invite students to contribute various perspectives drawing on their own cultural identities and/or experiences.
5. **Incorporate visuals with clear instructions, concepts or details of a task.** Some students who are anxious about their English language levels and applicability of academic skills may be overwhelmed by content delivered in fast flowing language. The considerable amount of information delivered by the teacher can be difficult to comprehend and as anxiety levels increase, the ability to identify and critically reflect on key points decreases for the student. Having information represented visually on slides as part of your teaching is important to ensuring key messages/themes/concepts are made clear. (Remember to allow enough time for students to read and digest the messages on the slides).
6. **Engage students through discussion and open questions.** Students are generally very happy to engage in discussion and share ideas, experiences and perspectives. This sharing of information occurs when a comfortable classroom culture is created by the teacher. Use open-ended questions, ask students to present alternative world views, draw on literature and evidence of various world views to *legitimise* and provide scope for exploration of these. Model this approach for the students so that they also understand ways of entering into scholarly discussion.
7. **Be sensitive to student levels of comfort and ability.** Ensure you tune into students' levels of comfort in the classroom. For instance, if a student looks uncomfortable answering a question you have posed about a culturally sensitive topic etc. provide a dignified 'way out', e.g. "it is a complex question and I should give you more time to consider it. However, if there is someone who has already reflected on this reading/idea, please do feel free to contribute any thoughts." You might ask students to consider certain themes, problems or

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viewpoints in a small group and then have a group representative report back to the class. This strategy provides a way for students to 'test out' their responses in a more comfortable smaller setting before their ideas and experiences are articulated to the whole class. You might use this opportunity to sit with selected smaller groups to monitor student progress, provide encouragement and guide discussion.

8. **Make an effort to pronounce names correctly.** This sends a very powerful message about the level of care and respect you have as a professional towards each of your students.
9. **Avoid stereotypes.** Don't assume that because a student comes from a particular ethnic background, that student embodies all the stereotyped characteristics portrayed of that group. You might just be surprised – or left red-faced!
10. **Don't make cultural differences a focal point.** The focal point of the lesson needs to remain on the learning objectives.

REFLECTION

1. What sort of strategies have you drawn on to create a culturally inclusive classroom environment?
2. Thinking about your current student cohort, how can you respond in a more culturally inclusive manner to support student achievement and satisfaction?
3. What are the notions, concepts, perspectives that are presented through your teaching that students find difficult due to different cultural contexts or interpretations etc.?
4. How can you work with students to unpack these more effectively, if needed?

For assistance in addressing academic and intercultural literacies as part of curriculum planning and delivery, get in touch with Academic Support and Development, Victoria University (studentlearning@vu.edu.au).

For further information on this resource or the Intercultural Engagement and Cultural Diversity (IECD) initiative at Academic Support and Development, Victoria University, please contact Dr Teresa De Fazio (teresa.defazio@vu.edu.au).

REFERENCES

Office for Learning and Teaching (2013. October). *Good practice principles in practice: Teaching Across Cultures*. <https://www.ieaa.org.au/documents/item/132> [Sourced 10 May, 2017].