Inviting innovation in pedagogical practices

Creative Ways to Build an Inclusive Learning Community in the Classroom and Engage Students

Richard Unis
Part-Time Sociology

How to Build Community in the Classroom

Part 1

What is **Community**?

How can we define *community*? (Think-Pair-Share Activity)

A feeling of fellowship with others...

Something we can comfortably participate in Community

= Inclusivity

Building Community Helps Students Learn

student's ability to learn is tied to their sense of belonging in our classes

Community Engaged Research

Projects that dismantle "systemic sources of racial and social injustice" create a critical sense of belonging for undergraduate college students. Especially when the research focuses on issues experienced by students in their home or communities. (Beckett, Lu, & Sabati., 2022; Gordon da Cruz, 2017;

A student's sense that they are

accepted, respected, included, and supported in the learning environment is connected to persistence and achievement. (Strayhorn 2012).

 The relationship between psychological well-being and academic motivation has been documented (Osterman, 2000; Tierra, Lynley, & Jane, 2007) (Brady et al., 2016; Wood et al., 2015)



What does it actually mean to be **included**?

Think of a time when you were and a time when you were

- **1.** Take a minute and focus on what made you feel this way. (language, actions, rules, culture, norms, values, group identity, individualized attention)
- **2.** Write what made you feel **included** and **excluded** on separate post-it notes and stick them to the wall. (be specific)

(5 min

Building Community is Equity Work

Vulnerable and socially stigmatized populations may benefit the most

Students of color (Gummadam, Pittman, & Ioffe, 2016; McGee, Thakore, & LaBlance, 2016, Newman, wood, & Harris III, 2015) first generation students (Yeager et al., 2016) economically disadvantaged students, (Langhout, Drake, & Rosselli, 2009) LGBTQIA+, (Grisset, Kaufmann, Greenberg, & Hilton, 2016) immigrant populations (Stebleton, 2016) and veterans (Sportsman & Thomas, 2015).

<u>experience</u>

build community

learning experiences that are inclusive

co-creators

<u>of the learning</u>

6 Basic Ingredients...





Basic Ingredients

- 1. Democratize the Classroom
- 2. Model Expert Learning
- 3. Counter Belief Erosion
- 4. Honor Student Realities
- 5. Challenge Stereotypes & Diversify Representation
- 6. Identify Your Own Blind Spots

Do you use any of these ingredients in your classroom?

1. Democratize the Classroom

- Don't oppress student voices. Amplify them!
 - o Discussion Debate Games classroom learning experiences
- Allow students to participate in the creation of rules (syllabus, assignments)
- Allow students to be co-creators of knowledge

2. Model Expert Learning

- Normalize the struggle of learning something new
- Share stories from your life, humanize yourself

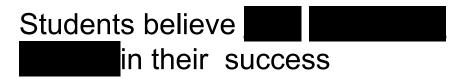
Allow multiple revisions

- Address distractions, share challenges in learning
- Discuss strategies, build study habits

3. Counter Belief Erosion



Offer micro-affirmations



- Make sure students know intelligence is a skill, not a trait
- Affirm students with personal messaging
- Discuss the inevitability of making mistakes, loss of confidence

4. Honor Student Realities

- Try being a student
- Learn about student realities
- Learn about your students and what they need to be successful
- Be flexible

Everybody faces a challenge that you know nothing about

5. Challenge Stereotypes & Diversify Representation

- Who are the **experts you reference?** (authors, speakers, past students, images)
- Counter stereotypical assumptions and oversimplifications
 We often teach what we were taught without examining it for bias
 Teach a contrapuntal history of your subject.
- Representing only a limited set of groups communicates to students (who may not share these identities) who the expert learners are and (by omission) who they are not.

6. Identify Your Own Blind Spots

- What assumptions do you make about students?
- Assumptions about coursework?
- Assumptions about your teaching?

Small Group Work

1. Create 6 sets of small groups, each group will work with 2. Discuss and prepare to you can use it in your teaching practice.

What has worked for you?

- What could you do?
- Any potential challenges?

How to Connect the Classroom to the Community?

Part 2

- 1. Research + Engage with a social issue in your community
- a. Select a topic b. Connect with a local
- organization
- 2. Create an opportunity to address a social sue you care about.
- a. Voluntee
- b. Interviev
- 3. Share what you learned with me, the class and the community.
- a. Reflection pape
 - b. Letter to representative

Present or organize

A Community-Based Final Exam

How can we use sociology to address issues in our community?

