Cultural Competency in the Classroom: Cross-Disciplinary Tools, Insights, and Strategies to Promote Student Success

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SEPAL
The Science Education Partnership & Assessment Lab
San Francisco State University
Meet a Colleague!

Share with a person near you that you do NOT already know…

1. Your name
2. Your position and department/unit
3. One teaching strategy you use to make your classroom fair and accessible to diverse populations of students
SEPAL: The Science Education Partnership and Assessment Laboratory

SEPAL

The Science Education Partnership & Assessment Lab
San Francisco State University

(≈ The Tanner Laboratory)

Founded in 2004…

• Programs
• Coursework
• Research

Funded by National Science Foundation (NSF) GK-12 Award,
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NSF Transforming Undergraduate Education in STEM (TUES) Award,
NSF CAREER Award, and HHMI Undergraduate Science Education Award.
Big Idea: Striving to Construct Learning Environments that Promote Student Success

Goals for our time together...

...to explore how the structure of learning environments might influence student success

...to unpack concrete teaching strategies that add structure to learning environments and promote fairness and student success

...to self-assess current awareness of and use of 20 common teaching strategies

...to identify specific teaching strategies that you want to try in your classroom this semester
A Common Experience: Building Mobiles

What comes to mind when you hear the word “mobile?”
A Common Experience: Building Mobiles

• With your group, construct a mobile.
• You will have ~10 minutes to construct your mobile.
Debriefing the Mobiles Experience: About Awareness...

• How did you work with your partner(s) to build the mobile?

• How *aware* were you about what materials other groups had?

• If you were *aware*, how did it feel to have different materials than other groups?
Debriefing the Mobiles Experience:

About Actions...

- Did your team *ask another team for materials*? Why or why not?
- Did your team *offer another team materials*? Why or why not?
- How does the Mobiles activity relate to cultural competence and constructing learning environments that promote success for diverse populations of students?
A Common Experience: Building Mobiles


Big Idea: Structuring Learning Environments Promotes Fairness and Access for All Students

Unstructured learning environments can lead to unfairness, feelings of exclusion, and collisions of students’ cultural backgrounds with the learning environment.

Adding structure to learning environments can mitigate unfairness, promote feelings of inclusion, and promote student success.

One concrete step towards cultural competence is using teaching strategies add structure to learning environments to promote fairness.
Big Idea: Cultural Competency and Teaching for Student Success

Moving away from assumptions that students are lacking...

Moving towards the idea that learning environments are lacking (in structure)...

STUDENT DEFICIT MODEL

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT DEFICIT MODEL
Strategies That Structure Learning Environments and Promote Fairness in Undergraduate Classrooms

• With a new partner, read through and discuss the descriptions of the 20 Teaching Strategies...

• In the margin, mark strategies with...
  – a “?” if you’d like to know more
  – a “✔” if it’s already familiar to you
Strategies That Structure Learning Environments and Promote Fairness in Undergraduate Classrooms

1. Think-Pair-Share
2. Ask Open-ended Questions
3. Allow Students Time to Write
4. Multiple Hands, Multiple Voices
5. Wait Time
6. Hand Raising
7. Use Popsicle Sticks/Index Cards
8. Assign Reporters for Small Groups
9. Whip
10. Don’t Judge Responses
11. Use Praise with Caution
12. Learn Students’ Names
13. Use Varied Active Learning Strategies
14. Collect Assessment Evidence from Every Student, Every Class
15. Work in Stations/Small Groups
16. Monitor Student Participation
17. Integrate Culturally Diverse and Relevant Examples
18. Establish Classroom Community and Norms
19. Don’t Plan Too Much
20. Be Explicit About Promoting Access and Equity for All Students
Strategies That Structure Learning Environments and Promote Fairness in Undergraduate Classrooms

• With your partner, self-assess your previous experience using each of the 20 Teaching Strategies and record this on the worksheet on the back.

• In particular, mark each strategy with ...
  
  “N” for never used,
  “O” for occasionally use, or
  “R” for regularly use
  “W” for “would like to try!”
Big Idea: Connecting Cultural Competence to Promoting Student Success

“We all carry worlds in our heads, and those worlds are decidedly different. We educators set out to teach, but how can we reach the worlds of others when we don’t even know they exist? Indeed, many of us don’t even realize that our own worlds exist only in our heads and in the cultural institutions we have built to support them. It is as if we are in the middle of a great computer-generated reality game, but the “realities” displayed in various participants’ minds are entirely different terrains.”

– Lisa Delpit, author of Other People’s Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom
Cultural Competence in the College Biology Classroom

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Feature
Approaches to Biology Teaching and Learning

Promoting Student Metacognition
Kimberly D. Tanner

CBE—Life Sciences Education Vol. 6, 251–258, Winter 2007

Feature
Approaches to Biology Teaching and Learning

Moving Theory into Practice: A Reflection on Teaching a Large, Introductory Biology Course for Majors
Kimberly O. Tanner

Department of Biology, San Francisco State University; San Francisco, CA 94132

Feature
Approaches to Biology Teaching and Learning
Reflections...

On one side of your index card...

— One thing that you will Still remember about this Session at the end of the semester...

On the other side...

— One thing, if anything, that you learned about today that you will use in your teaching this semester...
Thank you for choosing to spend your time with us today...

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