



CREATING AN INCLUSIVE COLLEGE FOR VANIER'S DIVERSE POPULATION

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INTRODUCTION

Vanier College welcomes students from over eighty different countries. Their diversity can pose enormous challenges. Our teachers have developed a wealth of strategies to use this multiplicity of backgrounds as a pedagogical tool to make the classroom a truly inclusive learning environment. Similarly, *The Learning Centre and Student Services* contributes to creating a welcoming environment outside the classroom. Through a simulation activity and an interactive presentation, we will share the excitement of working in such a milieu.

The presentation is based on ideas originally contained in a pamphlet prepared for teachers entitled, "Creating an Inclusive Classroom: A Guide for Teachers". A copy is attached to this *PowerPoint* summary and the pamphlet in its original form is also available in PDF format at: <http://www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/ctle/brochure.pdf>.

DEFINITION-DIVERSITY

- Students may have cultural, social, religious, personal perspectives other than our own.
- Encouraging students to share their cultural experiences and personal opinions.

STUDENTS' CHALLENGES

- Cultural, social, religious backgrounds.
- Education other than in English.
- Different pedagogical methodologies.
- High school/college discrepancy.

TEACHER SELF-EVALUATION

- Generalizations about ethnic groups?
- Expect students to be spokespersons for their ethnic background?
- Underestimate comprehension and written work?
- Equate grammar with academic ability?

COURSE PREPARATION

- Create a syllabus that explores multiple perspectives of course content.
- Include multiple and diverse cultural, literary and historical references.
- Plan background material/comparative references for course content.
- Prepare for any controversial reaction to course material.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

- Avoid generalizations or assumptions.
- Be cautious about language used.
- Do not ignore any racial or cultural differences.
- Get to know each student individually (not part of racial, ethnic, cultural or religious group).



KNOW YOUR STUDENTS

- Learn names and pronunciation.
- Find texts or develop questionnaires that elicit information about the students' interests and backgrounds.
- Encourage students to visit you during office hours.

MY NAME-EXERCISE

- A. Definition of your name: Origin, history, ethnicity, culture, religion.
- B. Define how your name reflects your character and personality.
- C. If you could change your name, would you? Why?

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Social and Cultural Background

- Role of English in your life?

Educational Background

- Educational background in English?
- Evaluate written and verbal skills.

Present and Future Linguistic Needs

- Why are you studying in English?
- What are expectations for this course?

Multicultural Questionnaire

1. Cultural background defines identity.
2. Some stereotypes are accurate.
3. One culture cannot understand another culture.
4. Cultures define success differently.

METHODOLOGY

Active, interactive, collaborative methodologies provide a basis for:

- Exploring multiple cultural perspectives.
- Encouraging student participation.
- Contributing to productive learning.
- Developing critical and analytical skills.

STUDENTS' INPUT

- Students suggest texts and authors that they want to study, in addition to course syllabus.
- Ask students to share their knowledge and thoughts on the course content.
- Encourage students to bring in or share personal and/or cultural references.
- Integrate assignments that permit students to explore their interests.

STUDENT PREPARATION

- Pre-reading and pre-writing exercises introduce and prepare students for the course content.
- Make students research or explore an unfamiliar or uncomfortable position.
- Relate course material to their personal experiences.

INSTRUCTIONS AND GUIDELINES

- Give specific instructions outlining how to write an essay, lab report, etc.
- Include practice exercises (research, citing sources, outlines, essay format).



- Provide sample outlines and essays.
- Highlight or underline the elements that formulate a proper essay.

USE VISUALS

- Students who link visuals to academic concepts improve comprehension, analysis and retention of material.
- Objects, maps, props, illustrations, diagrams transparencies, charts provide multiple clues to meaning.

PEER LEARNING TECHNIQUES

- Use copies or transparencies of students' work as study aids.
- Have students describe their studying and note-taking techniques.
- Organize peer tutoring sessions.
- Round-table discussions.
- Assign group projects.
- Study groups.

MARKING CRITERIA

- Let students participate in the choice and structure of assignments.
- Have students select the grading method that they feel responds to criteria outlined for their assignments.
- Self-evaluation and peer evaluation.

GROUP ORAL GRID

Interviews and in-class work: Outline; Rough Work; Visual

Essay: Organization; Content; Expression

Oral/visual: Introduction; Grammar; Supporting Ideas; Conclusion; Length; Creativity

PEER EVALUATION

Content: Topic; Objective; Analysis; Research

Organization: Thesis; Subtopics; Support; Conclusion

Group Work: Equal Participation; Preparation; Group Dynamic; Effort; Contribution of Ideas

COLLEAGUE COLLABORATION

- Ask a colleague to observe your class or consult with you on the methodology best suited for the specific needs of your course.
- Invite guest lecturers to provide a different point of view on your course.

CONCLUSION

CHALLENGES

- Teacher self-evaluation
- Re-evaluate course content
- Re-evaluate methodology

GOALS

- Inclusive class environment
- Participation
- Realize Potential



CREATING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM : A GUIDE FOR TEACHERS

1. PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES FOR VANIER COLLEGE'S DIVERSE STUDENT POPULATION

Vanier's population has changed considerably in the last twenty years. We now welcome students from over eighty different countries.

Many of these students face considerable challenges. They may have received most of their education in a language other than English and may have difficulty with English oral and written skills. In addition they may have been taught according to different pedagogical methodologies which not only affect how they analyze texts, but also how they approach written assignments. The students' cultural backgrounds also affect their approach in the classroom. Engaging in class discussion may, for example, pose considerable difficulty. Other students may be required to work long hours at outside jobs to support themselves and their families.

It may be difficult for teachers to adapt to the diversity of our population. This brochure offers suggestions on creating a more diverse, yet inclusive, classroom environment.

2. DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE PERSPECTIVE

The first step in responding to the diversity of our classrooms is to examine our views about our students, our course content, and ourselves, acknowledging and accepting that students in our classes may have cultural, social, and religious perspectives other than our own.

Questions to consider:

- Do I assume that all ethnic minority students are alike?
- Do I generalize about certain ethnic groups (gender roles, social behaviour, education, integration into mainstream society, religion, language, family structure, traditions, customs)?
- Do I assume that ethnic minority students will have more difficulty with comprehension or written assignments?
- If students have an accent or make grammatical errors, do I underestimate their academic ability?
- If ethnic minority students participate less, do I assume it is due to comprehension or language difficulties?
- If an issue dealing with race, culture or ethnicity comes up in a class discussion or while reading a text, do I assume that ethnic minority students will be the spokespersons (for their race, ethnicity, culture, religion) or experts on the subject?
- Am I more tolerant of ethnic minority students than I am of other students? For example, do I overly praise or point out the successes and achievements of ethnic minority students?

3. PLANNING FOR AN INCLUSIVE COURSE AT VANIER

- Choose a methodology that is based on interactive and collaborative learning methods, as well as teacher-centered instruction, to encourage students to become more actively engaged in the process of learning.



- Develop a syllabus that explores multiple perspectives on your course content.
- Take into consideration that in multicultural classrooms, not all the students will recognize the same cultural, literary or historical references. Prepare any necessary background material or comparative references to create an interest or foundation for your course content.
- Incorporate multicultural examples and references (texts, art, music, etc.) and let the students share their own knowledge and experience.
- Prepare for any controversial response to course material by providing responses (assignments, texts, discussions) that can offer a different outlook or viewpoint.

4. GENERAL TEACHING TIPS

Learning student names

Learn the names of your students as quickly as possible and how to pronounce them correctly. Students can be sensitive to mispronunciations and to public comments about their names. Also, note that some students may list their family name first so verification may be in order.

When you receive your class list, it is a good idea to ask the students if they prefer to be called by a nickname, a diminutive, or an alternate name.

Don't suggest that they change their name to a more "western" name. As well, don't automatically accept a "western" version of their name unless they insist it is their own choice and/or preference. Instead, ask them to help you learn the proper pronunciation of their name.

Forming student groups

Consider assigning at least one major group project as well as encouraging group work. You can mix up students by assigning them to different groups. You may find it useful to randomly assign group members.

Group work can counteract the self-segregation that sometimes occurs along racial and ethnic lines both inside and outside of the classroom. If students are finished their work, you may want to allow them a few minutes to chat; often they are sharing their perspectives and cultural differences.

You may also encourage students to form study groups for study purposes outside the College. In these groups, students not only learn from each other, but they also learn about one another.

Creating an inclusive environment of trust, respect, and collaboration

Allow students to participate in the selection of pedagogical approaches that are best suited for their needs and learning. Keep part of your syllabus open for the students' input. Allow them to suggest texts and authors that they want to study in addition to what is included in the official course syllabus.

Propose more than one option for essays and class assignment; this allows students to concentrate on their interests and strengths.

Become informed as much as possible about the various cultures represented by your students and acknowledge and incorporate the students' cultures whenever possible.

Knowing how particular students might react to classroom events as well as being able to interpret nonverbal communication could help prevent misunderstandings and confusion.

Avoid generalizations or referring to an ethnic group as "you people" or "those people".



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Use of office hours

Encourage your students to visit you during office hours, not just to discuss problems dealing with course material, but also so that you can simply talk and get to know them.

Multicultural Activities

Encourage your students to participate in the different multicultural events sponsored by the College. You are also invited!

You may want to participate in the monthly *Forum on Diversity* for teachers and staff. (Watch *Intercom* for details.) This forum promotes opportunities for an exchange of strategies for an inclusive classroom.

5. SPECIFIC STRATEGIES

Bringing the lives of students into the classroom

Have the students write about their personal lives. Students can learn about each other when they share these stories with the class. Some teachers have had their students write about their own or others' experiences as immigrants to begin discussion on the immigrant experience, for example.

Note: Not all students may want to be singled out to talk because of their ethnicity. Offer them other topics they may talk about: school life, their work, interests, etc.

Publications such as *The Learning Centre's Voices From Around the World: Stories of Vanier Students* can be used in the classroom to teach cultural concepts. Class sets of these booklets are available in *The Learning Centre*. You may want to visit *The Learning Centre* to browse through some of these remarkable stories.

Find texts, poems, etc. that elicit information about the students' interests and backgrounds: their culture, ethnicity, language, education, literature, music, art, and popular culture.

Introducing diversity into the classroom

Include assignments that recognize the students' diverse backgrounds. In one sociology course, for example, the students are asked to describe a cultural event that is important in their lives. The teacher then has the students describe this event using sociological terms.

From this assignment, students see if their experience fits into a certain framework. They then go on to prepare an outline for a longer paper with an annotated bibliography.

Invite guest lecturers to provide a different outlook or perspective on your course material.

Relate what your students will be learning to their past experiences. Have them share what they already know about a subject. Encourage them to bring in cultural references, for example, music or art that relate thematically to course content.



Give assignments where students learn about other cultures as well as their own. For example, students can research the background of an author, region or country of a text they have studied in class. Students can also be assigned a project about a culture or country other than their own.

Have the students examine their own cultural backgrounds in groups. Members exchange information about their own background, and go on to examine similarities and differences with other students. For one course, Vanier students interview children at various schools about their different cultures, their socialization, and the ways they have been brought up.

6. WORKING WITH ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) STUDENTS

Provide clear instructions and guidelines for written and oral assignments

Provide specific instructions outlining how to write a standard essay, lab report, etc. Offer details on how to formulate an introduction. Provide potential subtopics and a breakdown of the elements needed to compose each body paragraph as well as explain how to formulate a proper conclusion.

Provide students with sample outlines and essays. Highlight or underline the elements that formulate a proper essay (thesis statement, subtopics, literary elements, etc.) Photocopy or show transparencies of successful student essays to the class. Ask the student(s) whose essay(s) you have chosen to explain the structure of their essay.

When giving reading assignments, encourage your students to look for main ideas by giving them a framework or outline beforehand.

Prepare pre-reading and pre-writing questions in order to introduce the topics/issues of the course content. Have the students discuss the questions in groups and present their consensus to the rest of the class.

Set up student partnerships

Set up a partner system in which native or near-native English speakers are sometimes paired with language minority students. Group work, as well, increases the chances that the students with linguistic challenges will receive additional help.

Choose native or near-native English speaking students who take effective, comprehensible notes to duplicate them for ESL students. By this means, the ESL students can be provided with study aids. The student notes can be photocopied or shown to the class on transparencies.

Collaborate with colleagues to plan more effective classroom methods for ESL students

Ask a colleague who has ESL experience to look over your material or consult with you on the methodology best suited for the specific needs of your course. Strategies that work well with ESL students can be shared with colleagues to increase efficiency in lesson planning.

Use visual aids to clarify key concepts

Real objects, pictures, maps, props, illustrations on the board or transparencies, diagrams, charts and ideas with concept maps provide multiple clues to meaning. Handouts and *PowerPoint* presentations allow students to more easily follow what you are saying.



Summarize and review frequently

Concepts can become more firmly established with this additional reinforcement. In addition, a summary or review can provide perspective and context not only for the concepts that have already been learned but also new ones.

Refer your students to College resource centres

Ensure that your students are aware of the many resource centres the College offers to assist students and help them review their materials. In particular, *The Learning Centre* offers an English Peer Tutoring Program at no cost to the students.

CONCLUSION

It is true that the multicultural classroom presents many challenges; it also provides a great opportunity for teachers to evaluate themselves, their course content, and their methodologies so that they can create an inclusive, participatory classroom environment in which all students will be able to realize their full potential and achieve their goals.

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Note:

This brochure was compiled by the Office of Learning Enrichment and Support Services for Programs and Judy Macdonald. Please consult the website, Diversity at Vanier, for additional information about activities and readings: www.vaniercollege.qc.ca/ctle/diversity.