

12 CSD Tips for An Inclusive Classroom Experience

1. Reach out directly to students at the beginning of the quarter!

We are here to answer any questions you have regarding accommodations, but please feel free to reach out to your student(s) directly, taking action will help the students feel comfortable, and allow you to work out accommodations with them. Students often report feeling relief when their instructors contact them. It takes the pressure off them to explain their needs and helps them to feel supported and welcomed into their classes.

2. Consider the use of the “completion tracking” checklist for all assignments within each module within D2L.

CSD students report that they sometimes miss assignments on D2L because tasks are posted in different locations and are occasionally emailed. Many students have reported how much they appreciate when instructors use checklists to keep everything centrally located. This system helps the student's mountain clarity, improve organization, and reduce anxiety.

3. Please use specific due dates in your syllabi.

When due dates are listed as “Week Two”, for example, it can confuse the student. They are not sure what day and time things time-consuming need to be turned in. A clear due date removes all ambiguity. Furthermore, CSD students might need to get an early start on an assignment. Having a specific due date helps students plan and manage time effectively.

4. Please consider your camera on/off policy for students.

The CSD has fielded many concerns from students concerning the cameras on policy during synchronous classes. For a variety of reasons, a student who has a disability may be very uncomfortable being on camera consistently during a class. It can impede attendance and interfere with learning objectives. Additionally, some students may not have a dedicated space away from family and siblings to attend their classes and may prefer to attend classes with their cameras off/microphones muted. Due to shutdowns and disabilities placing them at-risk, they might not be able to go to a public place such as a coffee shop or library to attend their classes. If their internet is unstable, turning off their cameras also gives them a better connection. This is a great topic to discuss one on one with your students as everyone is different.

5. Please consider options for participation and/or demonstration of learning objectives.

Discussion board posts often ask students to synthesize information from class materials and readings, sometimes requiring students to cite sources, all with quick turnaround times. For students with some types of disabilities (processing disorders or reading disabilities, for example) this can be a very demanding and time-consuming task. There is a danger that due to being overwhelmed the posts will not truly reflect their knowledge or abilities. Knowing there is only one way to gain participation points can cause anxiety and discouragement. Students who otherwise would be very engaged with the material can become apathetic and disinterested.

6. Please consider the difficulty of online classes for students with disabilities.

Large amounts of screen time can be a stumbling block to many students. Their style of learning might not adapt easily to an online environment. Please be flexible when possible. This can include allowing for some extensions and checking in with your student about how they feel they are doing academically.

7. Consider having a conversation about how participation will work in your online class.

For students with certain disabilities, online classes pose significant social challenges. It is difficult to “read” a non-existent room to know when it is an acceptable time to jump in with a comment. How are they to know if it is OK to make small talk before class? Is there a preferred method for asking questions? Should they go to office hours for questions or hang out after class? Can the chat function be used during class? Social anxieties can run high and prevent students from participating and/or asking questions. Having various channels for communication and knowing the expectations can reassure students and encourage full inclusion.

8. Include disability rights in your discussions on social justice and in your syllabi.

Learn about and incorporate disability rights activists in your classroom lessons (if applicable) and mention disability rights in your syllabus. Recognize that students who have disabilities are a part of a marginalized community (oftentimes, they are a part of multiple marginalized communities). Work to amplify their voices and concerns. Fight for their rights. Let them know you are an ally. For many students,

it can be reassuring to see that a professor acknowledges them in their syllabi and is thinking of their needs. It can help facilitate discussion and participation.

9. Ensure that you protect the students' confidentiality.

If you would like to discuss accommodations face to face with your students, regardless if your class is meeting in person or over Zoom, please make arrangements to do so in a manner that protects student confidentiality. Asking students to hang back after class singles students out among their peers. Any discussions you have should not take place in front of other students. An easy way to arrange a meeting would be by email. You can discuss a meeting time and place with no need to make anyone else aware of your plans.

10. Consider recording your lectures and/or allow students to tape record your lectures.

Not everyone is an auditory learner. Many students will need to hear the same thing more than once and recording will allow for that.

11. Close Caption your zoom lectures.

Many students have difficulty processing information auditorily. To complicate matters, the auditory quality of zoom lectures has many variables. Poor audio reception, intermittent remote reception, unpredictable noise interruptions (dog barking etc.) are to name just a few. Closed captioning during your zoom lectures enables students to read your words while listening. Because students can see and listen at the same time they are more likely receive and retain the information.

12. Consider making participation about quality, not quantity or frequency.

Students with certain disabilities are at a disadvantage (think severe social anxiety, speech or auditory processing disorders, language disorders, visual disorders) when expected to participate in a class with non-disabled peers. Students who do not have disabilities that cause barriers to participation will be able to answer questions quite quickly. The opportunities for participation are easier for students with no disabilities simply because they have nothing to prevent them from taking that opportunity. For students who have certain disabilities, by the time they have formed their answers, gathered up their courage, or found the unmute button, the question has long been answered and the conversation has moved on. When comparing discussion posts, you might have students who post well over the word requirement. It is easy to grab all of their participation points. For a student who has dysgraphia, however, getting to that word count can be pure agony. Their posts



may fall short of length requirements or look “inferior” through no fault of their own.

Please try to offer a variety of opportunities for participation so that the playing field is level for all. Generally speaking, students have some idea of what will allow them to demonstrate their knowledge, so please consider having a discussion with them.