

# Characteristics of an Inclusive Classroom

Suzette L. Speight  
Maria Vidal de Haymes

What does an inclusive  
classroom mean to you?

## Inclusive Classroom is a Space Where:

- Varied instructional methods are used
- Varied perspectives are represented in the course content
- Ideas and “knowledge” are critically examined
- All participants can voice their ideas and learn from each other
- The varied experiences and backgrounds of the participants are valued and engaged

## Philosophy of Teaching and Learning

- Beyond instructional “tips”
- How we conceptualize student as learners and ourselves as teachers
- Education as a liberatory practice

# Constructing an Inclusive Classroom

## Delivery

- Delivery must acknowledge and address a diversity of learning styles while challenging dynamics of power and privilege in the classroom.
  - Vary instructional techniques
  - Understand the dynamics of power in the room so you do not perpetuate privilege and oppression
  - Challenge the notion of Teaching as Mastery

## Content

- Content must be complete and accurate, acknowledging the contributions and perspectives of all groups.
  - Ensure that the content is as complete and accurate as possible
  - Avoid tokenism – weave content about under-represented groups (People of Color, Woman, Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual People, People with Disabilities, etc.) seamlessly with that about traditionally over-represented groups
  - Study the history of discrimination in curriculum and ensure that you are not replicating it

## Teaching and Learning Materials

- Teaching and learning materials must be diverse and critically examined for bias.
  - Vary instructional materials
  - Examine all materials for bias and oppressive content
  - Diversify images in materials

## Perspective

- Content must be presented from a variety of perspectives and angles in order to be accurate and complete.
  - Present content from a variety of perspectives, not only that of majority groups
  - Present content through a variety of lenses, not just those of a few heroic characters

## Critical Exclusivity

- Students must be engaged in the teaching and learning process – transcend the banking method and facilitate experiences in which students from each other's experiences and perspectives.
  - Bring the perspectives and experiences of the students themselves to the fore in the learning experience
  - Encourage students to ask critical questions about all information they receive from you and curricular materials, and model this type of critical thinking for them
  - Make content and delivery relevant for the students – facilitate experiences in which they connect it with their everyday lives
  - Recognize your students as your most important multicultural resources

## References

Gorski, P. (2006). Seven key characteristics of a multicultural education curriculum. EdChange.org and the Multicultural Pavilion. Retrieved from the Internet November 9, 2006 from <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural>

Freire, P. (1990). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York, NY: Continuum.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York, NY: Routledge.