

Checklist for an Inclusive Classroom Community

Adapted from *A Guide to Effective Literacy Instruction, Grades 4 to 6 – Volume Two Assessment*, 2006, pp. 5–8.

Be sure to take the following considerations into account in planning classroom instruction and assessment.

ATMOSPHERE

- Create an equitable and inclusive classroom that respects gender differences, diverse ethnocultural and faith communities, family structures, student abilities/needs and differences in socioeconomic status.
- Take care that all students feel accepted and gain a sense of belonging.
- Convey your belief that all students can learn and succeed.
- Provide, for each student, a balance of challenge and support to scaffold new learning.
- Convey openness and warmth and encourage students to interact with others in the same way.
- Emphasize and model values of fairness, empathy, acceptance, kindness, respect and responsibility to and for other people.
- Create an atmosphere of respect for the school community and foster positive connections between the school and students' home and community cultures.
- Recognize and value student improvement and celebrate success for each individual.
- Challenge any and all stereotypical comments and inappropriate behaviours.

ENVIRONMENT

- Provide images and visual displays in the classroom that are gender balanced and reflect the diversity of the community and the world outside the classroom.
- Provide texts, resources and learning materials in the classroom that reflect diversity of culture, ethnicity, faith, and language, and differences in socioeconomic status, physical ability and family structure.
- Establish classroom routines that are sensitive to the individual needs and cultural norms of students.
- Ensure that classroom responsibilities are inclusive, gender balanced and not stereotyped.
- Give all students opportunities to display their best work.

COMMUNITY

- Value and celebrate diversity in the community by encouraging activities such as family literacy events, visits to classrooms and storytelling and games from various cultures.
- Create and plan literacy events using culturally diverse texts and learning materials.
- Use storytelling, games and performing arts to engage students and their families in the enjoyment of learning together.
- Invite community involvement in displays of books and materials appropriate for junior learners.
- Take care that all parents/guardians receive invitations in their own language as needed.
- Invite parents to share their insights, experiences and concerns within the context of the classroom curriculum.
- Invite guest speakers from various organizations, arts groups, etc. who represent the diversity of the local community and of the larger community in Ontario.

RESOURCES

- Use resources that value and reflect diversity – e.g., poems, rhymes, songs, dance and music from a variety of cultures; audio-taped books in a variety of first languages.
- Provide resources that appeal to both boys and girls.
- Use resources that reflect the interests and perspectives of both genders and present characters from a variety of different cultures and backgrounds in non-stereotypical roles.
- Use a range of resources that reflect the diverse cultures, social backgrounds and experiences of students in the class – e.g., that include topics of cultural and social relevance.
- Provide resources that accurately reflect the history, culture and realities of Canada's Aboriginal peoples.
- Use resources that present both local and global images and perspectives.
- Provide dual-language books and books in students' first languages.
- Provide a variety of resources with a range of reading levels for students, including English language learners, at different stages of reading development.
- Take care that financial considerations do not prevent students from participating in class trips and other school-sponsored experiences.

READING

- Provide opportunities for reading experiences that enable students to build on their own experiences, language and culture.
- Select texts that show situations, problems, solutions and experiences in a variety of cultural settings.
- Select texts that show both male and female heroes, role models and leaders from a variety of backgrounds.
- Select texts, such as fairytales and fables that invite comparison of similar plots, storylines and characters across a variety of cultures.
- Arrange text sets to include universal themes – e.g., hope, struggle, survival, courage, family – presented from a variety of different viewpoints and experiences.
- Arrange text sets of fictional and informational material that address topics of social relevance to the students – e.g., immigration, poverty, homelessness, war, social justice.
- Use texts to create role-play opportunities that enable students to experience the world through the eyes of another.
- Use fictional and informational texts to help students identify stereotypes of individuals, cultures and social backgrounds.
- Present picture books that enable students to explore images of gender, ethnicity and physical disability.
- Include a range of texts that present the contributions of people from a variety of ethnocultural backgrounds and from different parts of the world.
- Provide texts by local and international authors from a variety of cultures, social backgrounds, historical time periods and written from a variety of viewpoints.
- Use discussion and oral activities to help students make explicit connections between what they read and their own background and experiences.

WRITING

- Provide opportunities for writing experiences that enable students to build on their own experiences, language and culture.
- Provide models of writing from culturally diverse sources.
- Provide opportunities to explore oral and written language across a variety of cultures – e.g., oral storytelling, written stories, narrative techniques, language patterns.
- Provide supports for students who are challenged by various aspects of writing and spelling – e.g., graphic organizers, tape recorders, use of a scribe, allowing students to do tasks or make presentations in alternative ways.
- Provide students with the opportunity to compose orally before writing.
- Engage students in an exploration of writing across cultures and time – e.g., alphabets, writing forms and purposes, pictographs, materials, conventions.

LANGUAGE

- Respect and value the language students bring to school.
- Tap into students' family language and culture as foundations for learning.
- Provide classroom activities that enable students to learn that different language forms and styles and structures are appropriate to different situations – e.g., home, church, business meeting, school council, interview, parent–teacher interview, telephone conversation.
- Give students opportunities to consolidate their ideas verbally prior to writing where appropriate.
- Provide opportunities for students to use their first language to formulate and express their thoughts orally and in writing.

MEDIA/POPULAR CULTURE

- Guide students in examining stereotypes and bias in media works from a variety of sources.
- Use media texts to develop students' awareness of diversity (e.g., in beliefs, values, traditions, gender roles, family structures) among cultures, faiths and people from different social backgrounds.
- Use media texts from different cultures to develop students' awareness of how cultural perspectives influence presentation of the same topics or events.

TEACHING PRACTICES

- Plan for differentiated instruction based on the different stages that students have reached in the reading process and their individual progress.
- Help each student choose topics of high interest and engagement for independent reading, writing and inquiry.
- Provide appropriate opportunities to explore issues of bias and stereotyping related to language, culture, ethnicity, faith, gender, sexual orientation, economic status, family structure, age and physical/cognitive ability.
- Use technology to provide additional visual, oral, aural and/or physical supports for students who need them.
- Use instructional strategies that reflect diverse learning styles.
- Make strong links to students' prior knowledge and interests.
- Tap into students' family, language and culture as foundations for learning.
- Group students in ways that are sensitive to students' varying comfort levels with group interaction.
- Respect culturally diverse expectations and practices with regard to group work – e.g., willingness to ask questions, express disagreement, take initiative.
- Use a variety of grouping strategies – e.g., gender, abilities, interests, backgrounds, reading levels, first language.
- Take care that home/school tasks are equitable – e.g., recognize that tasks that require access to technology or use of libraries may result in inequities and create barriers to success for some students.

ASSESSMENT

- Use assessment methods that reflect the diversity of students' learning styles, language and culture.
- Use a variety of assessment tasks so that students with different learning styles can achieve success.
- Take into consideration cultural expectations and behaviours that may have an effect on assessment – e.g., shyness in answering questions, expressing opinions.
- Provide accommodations for students who require extra time or additional explanations.
- Provide information about the results of student assessments, classroom events and celebrations to all parents, including those for whom English is not their first language.
- Use evaluation methods that are equitable and take into account the diversity of students' life experiences and learning needs – e.g., refugee experience, amount of previous schooling.

Thinking about Thinking: Becoming an Independent Reader (Used in Session 1)