

Classroom Strategies for Promoting Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

In Spring 2022, NCTC held a series of workshops, facilitated by educators Corey Mitchell and Sidney Horton. We've compiled takeaways from those conversations that may help you assess your program and deepen your work to make a more inclusive classroom.

Definitions

Diversity is about looking at each of the characteristics that make us unique (age, gender, race, ability status, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, height, weight, parental status, marital status, etc)

Equity and **Equality** focus on making sure everyone gets access to the same opportunities. Equality is when each person gets the same resources and opportunities. Equity is when each person's different circumstances are taken into account, and everyone is allocated the amount of resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome.

Inclusion is creating an environment of welcome where everyone feels welcome, supported, respected, and valued, and provides an environment that encourages them to contribute their very best work. Focusing on **racial equity** provides the opportunity to introduce a framework, tools, and resources that can be applied to other areas of marginalization. To have maximum impact, focus and specificity are required.

Seven Strategies to Promote Equity in Your Classroom

1. Demystify Your Space

- a. This might include in-school "field trips" to the stage and other activities to introduce new students to your space, and also revisiting your written and verbal classroom policies in your spaces to ensure they're welcoming.

2. Expand Your Programming

- a. Look at smaller scale, lower stakes events to introduce students to performing. Examples: An evening of original plays, Improv Night, Open Mic Night with pop music, Poetry Slam, Comic Night, Cabaret Night, 24

Hour Play Festival, Living Newspaper, or other activities.

3. Actively Recruit

- a. Work with your feeder schools, other departments including English and Social Studies, and Community Groups to identify kids, then approach them and intentionally invite them to participate in your program.

4. Expand Your Curriculum

- a. Introduce other art forms like music and poetry, discuss theatre history outside the Western European context, and introduce theatre from Black writers and other writers of color into your curriculum.
- b. When possible, give students diverse options for scene and monologue work so they can pick works that speak to their own experiences.

5. De-center Your Experience

- a. “The one thing we know is exactly what we know.” Educate yourself about other cultures, including the cultures of your students so you can approach theatre from a different perspective.

6. Actively Engage Students’ Interests

- a. Show up in students’ spaces outside of your classroom. Learn about their lives and communities. Foster genuine relationships.

7. Offer Students a Future

- a. “Noticing someone is one of the biggest impacts we can make as educators.” Validate all your students’ efforts in the arts. Encourage students who show passion or promise. A lifelong commitment to the arts often begins in the classroom. Remember that your students will go on to be the artists and audiences for the future.