

Five Strategies That Work

The following five strategies foster just, equitable, and inclusive classrooms.

1. *Create opportunities for group decision making.* Open dialogue engages students in a democratic process in which compromise rather than competition is crucial to making decisions.
2. *Democratize the space.* When group decision making or student interaction is key to an effort, rearrange the room. Change which way is the front, move all the desks to the side, or have students sit on the floor in a circle and link arms. Let students have a say; give them a chance to learn from their decisions.
3. *Use multidimensional group projects, and vary the composition of the groups.* A good group project should highlight different learning styles and skills. Graphic, textual, presentation, creative, and other components should have equal importance; successful completion of the project will require interdependency among group members.
4. *Vary protocols for classroom sharing.* Student sharing in classrooms typically comes through talking or writing; often the fastest or loudest wins the stage. Instead, use reflection and writing time to help students organize their thoughts, have students share through visual art without using language, or have students share in pairs or small groups. Focus on ways for the writer, the thinker, the talker, and the visual artist to share their ideas.
5. *Create conflict around issues.* When discussing issues in class, provide a more realistic experience of what a complex issue is. Taking different sides of an issue—not to compete and win, but to come to a collective decision—creates a democratic experience that demonstrates the messiness and complexity of the process.

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