

# *Classroom and Campus Practices that Support Autistic Students*

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# Agenda

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Recap: Share Take-aways

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Your Experiences & Current Practices

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Relationship Building

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Setting Clear Expectations

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Pedagogical and Other Practices to Increase Access

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Responding to Needs

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Resources & Tools for Continued Learning





Share Take-Aways  
from Last Session

# Your Take-Aways

In the last session we covered

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Language Use and Definitions

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Share Your Experiences & Current Practices

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Autism as a Disability

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Bias and Barriers

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Autism as a Culture

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Communication Considerations and Tools

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Applying our Learning

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Further Resources

- What are you thinking about?
- What might you incorporate into your work?
- What do you want to learn more about?
- What further information do you want to share?
- What questions do you have?





# Increasing Access: Share Your Experiences & Current Practices

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# Relationship Building





## Starting with Relationships in Mind

Building from the start supports a positive learning environment! 7



# How do you connect?

- Share your current practices
- Share additional ideas

## Consider:

- Double Empathy Problem
- Intense Interests
- Board or Card Games
- Sitting side-by-side
- Mirroring body language



# In the Classroom

- ❑ Survey at start and midpoint
  - ✓ What questions will you ask?
- ❑ Personal feedback on assignments
  - ✓ Within 7 days of submission (support student expectations for this)
- ❑ Individual meetings, making deliberate choices, reaching out
  - ✓ Who will you contact first and why?
  - ✓ Required office hours or meeting as an assignment
- ❑ Checking in for missed classes or assignments
  - ✓ What contact methods will you use?
- ❑ Connect Students to Campus Resources
- ❑ Other ideas?







# Creating Clear Expectations





# Classroom & Office Expectations

How do students know the expectations for each class (and each office)?

How can everyone make these clear?

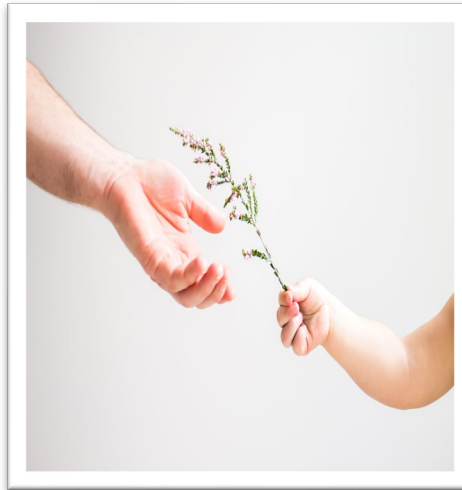
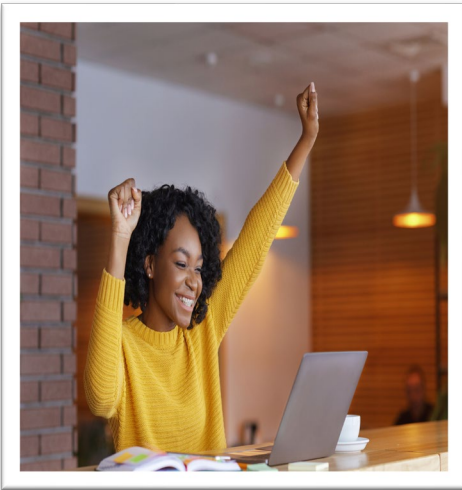
How can you support student understanding and observance?

Are there any accommodations for this?

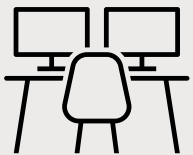
# Let's Try It!

## Share in the chat or aloud:

- A classroom or office rule
- Try to state it positively:
  - *"Do this"* instead of *"Don't do that"*



- Student and Staff treatment of each other (spoken, written, nonverbal)
- What to do upon entering office – check-in, etc.
- Making appointments and dropping in expectations
- Providing information – allow for multiple means
- Provide definitions and examples of words, “respect” etc.
- Use of technology (if applicable)
- Emailing, messaging, phoning, texting (what are the “rules”?)
- Use students’ accommodations during meetings with them



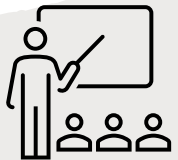
## Setting Clear Expectations – In Your Office

What other expectations do you have?





- Students' treatment of each other (spoken, written and nonverbal.)
- Provide definitions and examples of words, "respect" etc.
- Use of technology (if desired)
- Leaving and entering the classroom, when, how, if late
- In-class discussions, participation
- Discussion Board Posts (consider if these are truly adding to the class)
- Answering & asking questions in class
- Remember accommodations when meeting with students



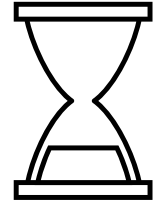
## Setting Clear Expectations - Class Agreements



What other expectations could be set?



# Share These Participation Concepts



## Step Forward, Step Back

- Explain Step Forward, Step Back
- If you are typically quieter: **Step Forward** and share your thoughts
- If you typically have a lot to say: **Step Back** and leave space for others to share
- General rule: share at least once, no more than three times per class
- Post discussion questions early
- Allow participation options

## W.A.I.T.

- Ask yourself **W**hy **A**m **I** Talking?
- Look over the discussion questions ahead of time
- Think through what you want to say
- Listen to hear if anyone else says it
- Speak up when you have something new to add
- Listen some more, step forward, step back



# Pedagogical and Other Practices to Increase Access



A blurred background image showing students in a classroom setting. On the left, a student in a yellow shirt is partially visible. In the center, a student with blonde hair and glasses is looking down. On the right, a student with dark hair is also looking down. The overall scene is out of focus, emphasizing the text overlay.

Many autistic students  
have not registered  
with disability services.

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*How can we build practices  
and procedures to accessibly  
accommodate them without  
disclosure?*



25% of all students report a disability

63% of disabled students do not report

# Who are your students?

*And how will you know?*

## LOAs

Letters of Accommodation

## Intros

Student Introductions

## Confusion

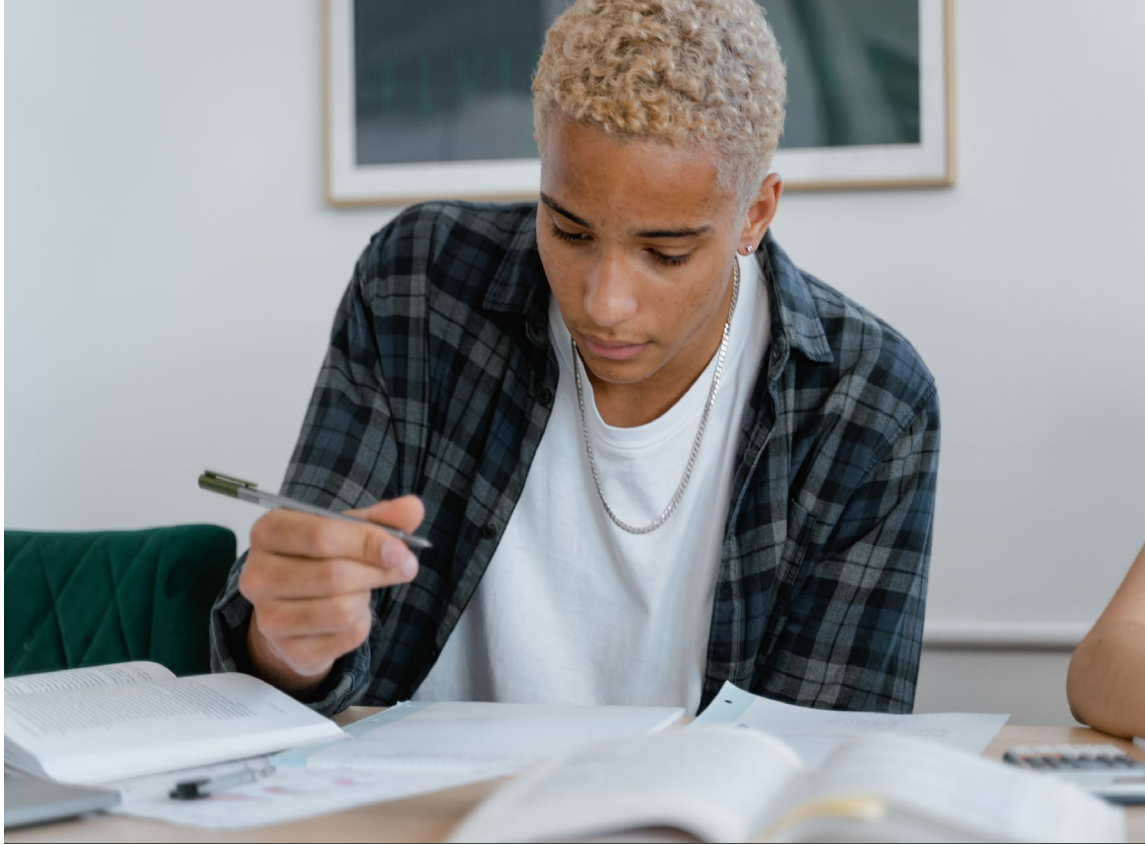
Who is asking a lot of questions or turning in inaccurate assignments?

## Missing Work

Who is missing work altogether, especially multiple assignments?

**They might tell you!**





## Important Note

You may not know the exact nature of someone's disability!

Students are under no obligation to disclose details of their disability to you, although they may choose to do so.

Legally, you may not ask them the nature of their disability and Disability Services cannot reveal it to you.

You may notice them struggling in some areas, or they may disclose to you.

It is not necessary to know the details of, or even the name of, a student's disability to respond to, include, and communicate with them effectively!



# Student Rights, Faculty Rights

And obligations!





# Faculty and Student Rights and Obligations (R&O)

## Faculty R&O

- To receive letters of accommodation (LOA) for students who request them
- To consult with disability specialists
- To implement accommodations requested through LOAs
- To receive support
- Prevent & report discrimination
- Not be discriminated against

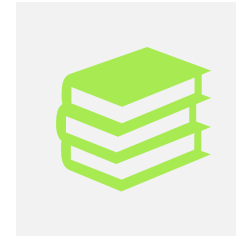
## Students R&O

- To maintain privacy around their disability and disability status by choice
- To access instruction, activities, and assessments
- To communicate with faculty about their needs around accommodations
- To receive support
- Not be discriminated against
- Comply with conduct code



# Consider:

How many disabilities are apparent?  
How many are non-apparent?  
How will you know / prepare / respond?



## Know

Learn about disabilities (& other issues) and how they might affect students



## Prepare

Design curriculum to provide access for all



## Respond

Respond to individual situations thoughtfully



# In my classroom I want...



## EQUALITY

Treating everyone  
the same.



## EQUITY

Giving each person  
what they need  
to be successful.



## JUSTICE

Eliminating barriers  
so that everyone  
can succeed.



## INCLUSION

Creating environments in  
which everyone can be and  
feel welcomed, respected,  
supported, and valued to  
fully participate.

# Considering All Students Through an Equity & Inclusion Lens

We cannot treat all students the same when the world isn't equal.

Instead of:

- "It isn't fair to the other students"

Consider:

- "What is equitable for this student?" "How can they be included?"





# Who needs inclusive design?

Everyone!

Inclusion needs aren't  
limited to disability.

People run into access  
barriers for many  
reasons.

Proactive accessible  
design means everyone  
can contribute and  
participate.





"WHEN A FLOWER  
DOESN'T BLOOM YOU FIX  
THE ENVIRONMENT IN  
WHICH IT GROWS, NOT  
THE FLOWER."

Alexander den Heijer

Proactive Design for Common Accommodations



# Common Accommodations

Others?



## Extended Time

For quizzes and tests: how does this work?



## Notes

Can be notetaker, copies of faculty notes, other



## Flexibility

In due dates, in attendance, participation



## Technology

Assistive Tech, i.e., screen reader, or ability to use tech in class



## Clarity

Clear assignments, study guides, more

*How can we build these in proactively? How are you already doing this?*

# Pedagogical Approaches for Access and Inclusion

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT)
- Group Work and Discussion Boards
- Structure & Flexibility
- Relationship Building

## Tools to Use

- Plain Language
- LMS
- Boundary Setting







## Designing to Minimize Barriers, Maximize Inclusion

# Universal Design - Multiple Means of:

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## **Engaging students**

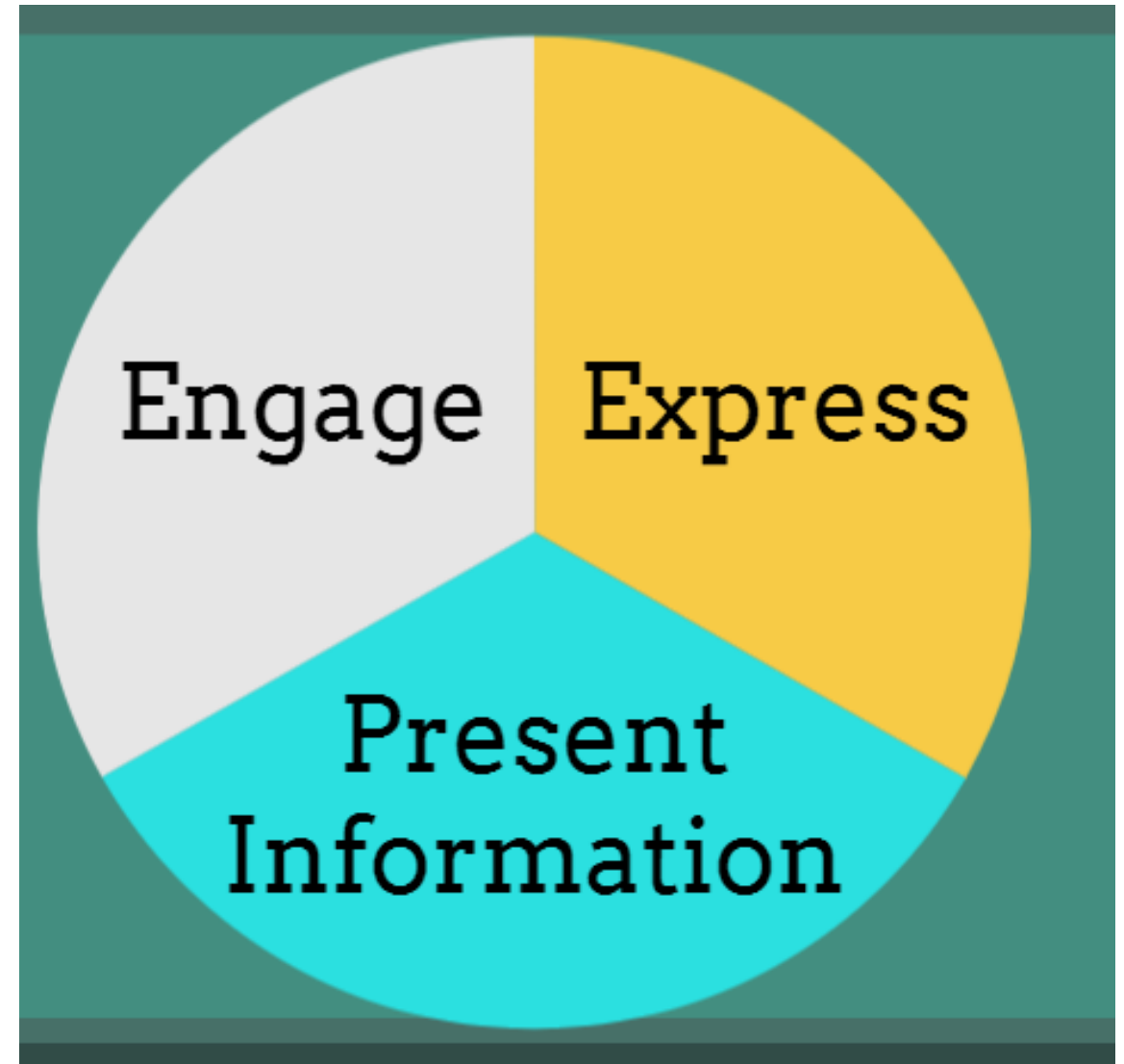
- Provide the same information in multiple ways

## **Presenting information**

- Include visual (written & pictures) and auditory for everything!

## **Expression (Assessments)**

- Allow creativity & options





# What does Inclusion mean for you?

## Students Need

- Knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm
- Challenge and engagement
- Support for barriers, autonomy

## Faculty Considerations

- Build in support & challenge
- What do you want students to know, do, and care about?
- What are the barriers?
- Present content in multiple media and use visual supports
- Provide choices for engaging in materials
- Provide options for expressing information

How can we  
use this  
concept in  
Student  
Services?



PRESENT  
INFORMATION



ENGAGE



EXPRESS

# TILT- Transparency in Learning and Teaching



Providing transparent information to students on the purpose, task, and criteria in an assignment or activity



## Transparent Assignment template

Assignment Name, Due Date	Purpose: Skills, Knowledge	Task: defining the specific task, with steps	Criteria for Success: what does a well-done assignment look like? Rubric
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# Group Work Considerations

- Allow for both self-assigned and faculty-assigned groups
- Provide structure
- Set expectations and teach teamwork skills
- Assign or give choice of roles
- Provide class time for group work
- Set interim deadlines
- Support communication
- Check in with groups
- Allow anonymous group feedback







# Discussion Boards & Anxiety

## ➤ Factors to consider

- Trauma & Triggers
- Difference between preference and need
- Encouraging student growth

## ➤ Course Design

- Consider purpose of discussion board vs. reflection
- Public & Private options
- Do not require responding to classmates



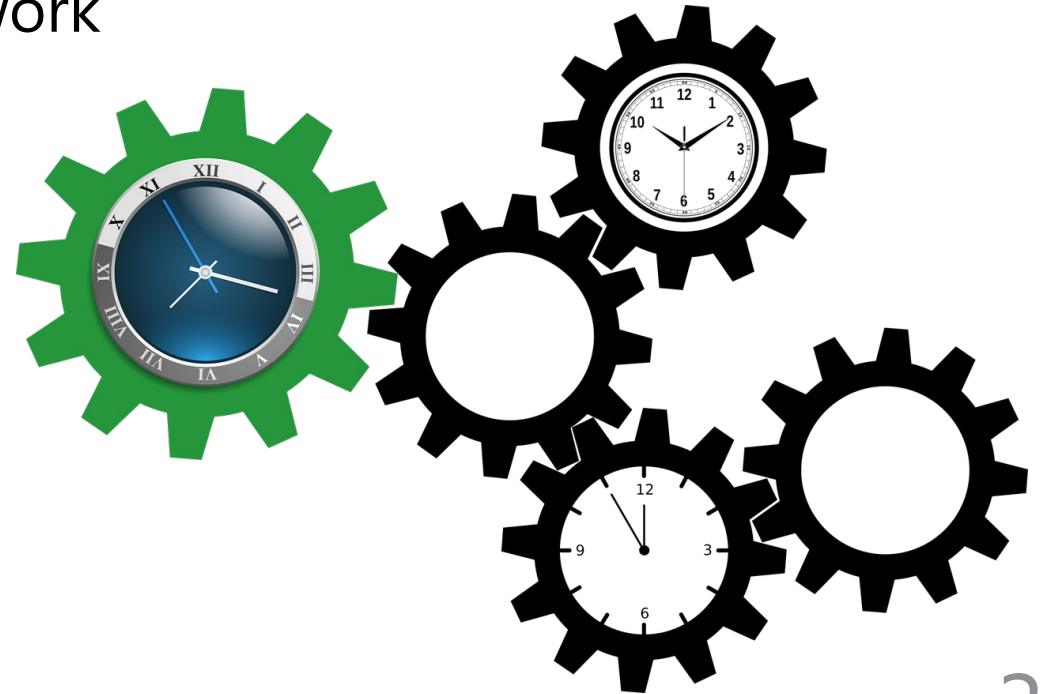
# Structure & Flexibility

## Provide structure

- Support students in understanding why it's important to work through assignments regularly
  - Learning material, builds on previous work
  - Your time and energy
  - Classmates' time and energy

## Practice flexibility

- Allow for late work without penalty
  - Provide guidelines
  - Allow exceptions
  - Believe students





## Supportive Relationships

- Use student names & pronouns
- Meet with students one-on-one
- Monitor progress & intervene

What else do you do?





# Designing to Include All

Discussion – use the chat, raise your hand, or simply unmute and speak!

**How can we incorporate these concepts throughout the college?**

- In our offices?
- In one-on-one meetings?
- For events?



Image by [kerut](#) from [Pixabay](#)

# Tools

# Language & Stress





# What is Plain Language?

"A communication is in plain language if its wording, structure, and design are so clear that the intended readers can readily find what they need, understand it, and use it."



<https://www.plainlanguage.gov/>

# Example

## Before

The student applicant should be sure to be on time, and submit an official copy of his or her transcript, two letters of recommendation from professors, a statement of financial need, and a short biographical statement to our grants' office by April 15

## After

To apply, submit the following items to our grants office by April 15:

- An official copy of your transcript
- Two letters of recommendation from professors;
- A statement of financial need; and
- A short biographical statement.

Email to: [grants@office.us](mailto:grants@office.us) OR

Fax to: 555.555.5555

# Learning Management System

- Use it!
- Modules help organize materials into weekly work
- Cidi Labs will help you organize
- How are you using it?



canvas  
BY INSTRUCTURE





# Boundary Setting for Self-Care

- Your mask first
- Burnout and Demoralization
- Taking breaks





Your Mask First

"You can't deep-breathe your way out of a pandemic; you cannot stretch your way out of terrible class sizes; you cannot 'individual behavior' your way out of structural problems."

CHELSEA PRAX, AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS



A student may struggle even after you've made your course as accessible and inclusive as you can!

There are many supports and services on campus to help.

## When & How to Refer

- Disability Services
- Counseling
- Conduct or CARE Team
- Others?



## Responding to Needs

When to refer to Disability and other campus services

# Most important consideration

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Everyone is an individual with their own personal story, barriers, and needs.

Creating an accessible environment will support and welcome everyone!





# Discussion Questions

Start, stop, keep:

- What would you like to start doing based on what we've talked about?
- What would you like to stop doing?
- What are you already doing that's working well for all your students?

What "ah-ha" moments will inform your teaching going forward?



We can design our environments so the most common accommodations are woven into our process. This:

- Ultimately saves us time.
- Supports all students
- Engages more students
- Provides a more equitable, inclusive environment
- Allows us to focus on relationship development, and
- Leaves time for implementing the less common accommodations

We can refer struggling students to appropriate resources.

We can (and should) seek support for ourselves also!



## Putting it all together

Building equitable, inclusive classes and handling accommodations with ease.



# Tool Kit & Resources

- [Plain Language](#)
- [UDL at a Glance \(5 min video\)](#): CAST
- [TILT: Transparency in Learning and Teaching](#): TILT Higher Ed
- [Reasonable Accommodations Explained](#): APA Disability Resources Toolkit
- [Faculty Self-Evaluation Plan](#): UC Berkley Disability Access & Compliance
- [Neurodiversity Navigators Faculty Resources](#): Bellevue College, WA State
- [Redesign or Accommodate](#): Accessibility Toolkit
- [The Ever-Dreaded Discussion Board](#): Toolkit of Ideas from the State University of New York at Buffalo
- [Student Group Work](#): Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning



# Redesign or Accommodate

Let's take a look at some students and think about your courses!

Please participate by chatting, raising your hand, or unmuting and speaking out!



# How Will You Respond? How Can You Prepare?

*Share what you are already doing or what you can do to be inclusive.*

“ ”

I'm sorry I missed class last week – I couldn't get out of bed.

“ ”

This assignment makes no sense! I couldn't do it on time.

“ ”

I can't work in groups – no one understands me. I do all the work.

# First, let's meet some students

*While you meet them, consider these things:*

## Think

Do you think this student might qualify for ADA accommodations?  
Something else? What supports do they need?

## Plan

How will you approach the situation? Will you need to provide accommodations? Or redesign your course or an assignment?

## Prepare

Or are you already prepared since you've designed your course for accessibility?



Kelly

**My name is Kelly** and I'm a 1<sup>st</sup>-year horticulture student.

I sustained a brain injury that affects my vision. My vision changes from hour to hour and minute to minute based on the exposure to:

- Fluorescent lights
- Computer screens
- Movement (e.g. traffic on a road)
- Fatigue

When I'm exposed to these triggers, I experience blurred and double vision.

I am 25 years old and I am looking forward to a career in landscaping.





Alex

**My name is Alex.** I am a 3<sup>rd</sup>-year Business student and I want to be a chartered accountant when I graduate.

I am on the autism spectrum and prefer to do my work independently rather than in a group. I can have difficulty understanding someone if they do not say exactly what they mean. I can struggle with overstimulation; for example, I don't work well under fluorescent lighting and can be hypersensitive to smells or background noise.

I am 20 years old, and I watch wrestling with my friends every Monday night.



Khaleed

**My name is Khaleed** and I am a 2<sup>nd</sup>-year Arts student studying political science.

I live with depression. It is recurrent and can vary in its severity. I was hospitalized 4 years ago. Sometimes my depression comes in the form of feeling like a failure, or worrying that I have let everyone down. It is difficult to stay motivated to even attend class, particularly when experiencing an episode of depression.

I am 20 years old and I would like to follow in my mother's footsteps and become a crown prosecutor.



*Maridee*

**My name is Maridee** and I am a 3<sup>rd</sup>-year Business student.

I am a single mother of a rambunctious 4-year old. As a mom, it can be hard for me to find childcare for my daughter and transportation that fits with my class schedule. When I cannot find those, I usually have to skip class. Another problem can be managing expenses.

As a mature student, it's easy to feel like an outsider in my classes and group work can be so difficult to fit into my schedule with all my other responsibilities.

I am 34 years old and my daughter, Celeste, is four. Right now, Celeste wants to be a fire fighter when she grows up.





## Final Discussion Questions

- What additional questions do you have?
- What else would you like to share?
- What can we do to better support you?
- Anything else?

# References

## Research

- [Toward a Deeper Understanding of the Learning Style Myth](#): Nancekivell, Shaylene E., Shah, Priti, Gelman, Susan A., Journal of Educational Psychology, 2020, Vol.112, No.2, 221–235. *American Psychological Association*
- [Fact Sheet- Students with Disabilities in Higher Education](#): Postsecondary National Policy Institute

## Articles & Videos

- [Majority of College Students with Disabilities do not Inform School](#): National Center for Education Statistics
- [Teaching Methods](#): Dartmouth Center for the Advancement of Learning
- [Accessibility Toolkit – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition](#): Amanda Coolidge; Sue Doner; Tara Robertson; and Josie Gray, Open Access, BCcampus