Creating Neuroinclusive Learning Spaces & Pedagogy

Resource
Keynote
“Neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for the human race as biodiversity is for life in general. Who can say what form of wiring will be best at any given moment?” — Harvey Blume, *The Atlantic*, 1998
Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it locks and intersects. It is the acknowledgement that everyone has their own unique experiences of discrimination and privilege.

— Kimberlé Crenshaw —
Intersection of Race and Neurodivergence

“Living with the intersectionality of being a black man with dyspraxia presents the challenge of disentangling whether social barriers presented are due to race or neurodivergence. Companies that are inclusive on the grounds of ethnic diversity are not necessarily organizations with neurodivergent staff.” Tumi Sotrie
Intersection of Race and Neurodivergence

- White children are about 19 percent more likely than Black children and 65 percent more likely than Hispanic children to be diagnosed Autistic (reference).
- Until recently, Black children in the United States were less likely to be diagnosed with autism than their white and Asian peers, although studies in both the U.S. and Europe have found higher rates of autism among children of immigrants, including some Black children (reference).
Intersection of Race and Neurodivergence

- Many Latino families in the study had not heard of ASD or had little information about it. Families sometimes assumed ASD red flags were normal or could be attributed to family dysfunction. Families also had concerns about provider communication and access to language services. Having a child with a developmental delay was associated with embarrassment, rejection, and family burden, making it difficult for parents to raise developmental concerns with providers (reference).
Systems Overview
4 Is of Oppression
Ableism

● A term that emerged out of disability rights movement; **ableism** refers to bias, prejudice, and discrimination against people with disabilities. It hinges on the idea that people with disabilities are less valuable than nondisabled people.

● At its core, ableism is rooted in the assumption that disabled people require 'fixing' and defines people by their disability.

● Ableism is discrimination and prejudice against people with disabilities, though that’s not quite enough to convey its full weight.

● “Ableism is attitudes, actions, and circumstances that devalue people because they are disabled or perceived as having a disability” (Nario, Redmond, M.R. (2020).
Models of Disability
The Spoon Theory is a creative way to explain to healthy friends and family what it’s like living with a chronic illness. Dysautonomia patients often have limited energy, represented by spoons. Doing too much in one day can leave you short on spoons the next day.

If you only had 12 spoons per day, how would you use them? Take away 1 spoon if you didn’t sleep well last night, forgot to take your meds, or skipped a meal. Take away 4 spoons if you have a cold.

The Spoon Theory was written by Christine Miserando, which you can check out on her website www.butyoudontlooksick.com.
THE CURB-CUT EFFECT

WHEN WE DESIGN FOR DISABILITIES

... WE MAKE THINGS BETTER FOR EVERYONE

sketchplanations
Neurodivergent and neurodiversity

**Neurodiversity**: the range of differences in individual brain function and behavioral traits, regarded as part of typical variation in the human population (used especially in the context of autistic spectrum disorders).

**Neurodivergent**: differing in mental or neurological function from what is considered typical or “normal” (frequently used with reference to autistic spectrum disorders); not neurotypical.
NEURODIVERGENT UMBRELLA

ADHD  ASPD  DID & OSDD  BIPOLAR
BPD  NPD  AUTISM  EPILEPSY
DYSLEXIA  CPTSD  OCD  ABI
DYSPRAXIA  TIC DISORDERS
SENSORY PROCESSING DISORDER
DYSCALCULIA  MISOPHONIA  HPD
PTSD  DYSGRAPHIA  DOWN SYNDROME
DYSGRAPHIA  SYNTHEISA

*NON-EXHAUSTIVE LIST  www.livedexperienceeducator.com  @livedexperienceeducator
Barriers to inclusion
Barriers

● Demonizing or pathologizing folks, especially neurodivergent BIPOC
● Monitoring thinking and behaving patterns
● Judging someone else’s way of getting things done, their thought process, work habits, and even productivity
● Shaming folks who don’t fall in line with typical behaviors
● Normalizing ableist slurs and using them
● Treating neurodivergence as a brokenness or something to be fixed
● Blaming the neurodivergent for conflict/misunderstandings
Attitudinal and systemic barriers

- Ideas and practices which do not allow a space for multiple perspectives
- Not checking non-disabled privilege
- Use of inappropriate, derogatory or outdated language
- Expectations of folks to complete certain tasks without modifications
- Stereotypes
- Lack of recognition of disability culture

https://sites.google.com/site/ableisminschools/website-builder
Strategies
Specific curriculum strategies

- Universal Learning Design (UDL)
- Give alternative assignments
- Be clear with expectations
- Ask yourself if this deadline is rigid for a reason
- Provide written and verbal instructions with guidelines of assignments
- Rolling deadlines with the understanding if something is turned in “late” it will get graded when it’s graded
- Flexibility can be built into the syllabus
- Build in extra credit opportunities
- Give a certain number of “free” passes for missing class
- Attempt to foster psychological safety in the classroom
General strategies

- Longer pause after asking questions (15 seconds) to allow process time
- Challenge your individual assumptions about ability and neurodivergence by doing some self-work
  - Seek to understand others without judgement of their needs
- Inquire about feedback and input through a variety of modalities
- Be flexible and cultivate an environment for both flexibility and inflexibility
- Codify flexibility into policies rather than requiring the individual to request
- Be clear with instructions
  - Provide written and verbal instructions
General strategies

- Think of neurodivergence as a different operating system, not an error
- Pay attention to personal language usage
- Lean into your awareness gaps
- Listen to neurodivergent folks and learn from actually Autistic adult voices
- Read some of the books in your resource guide
- Pay attention to cues you think are disrespectful, and challenge yourself to see those not as disrespectful but potentially a difference
Some language tips

- Person first v. identity first
  - “Person with Autism” v. “Autistic”
  - Mirror what someone else uses
  - Don’t correct disabled people or people with disabilities
- ‘Neurodivergent’ v. ‘neurodiverse’
- ‘Non-disabled’ v. ‘able-bodied’
- Ableism and anti-ableism
- Time blindness
  - Time agnosia
  - Difference in time perception
- Blindspot
  - Awareness gap
Moving forward

● What’s one thing you can **start** doing to combat ableism and neurotypical thinking patterns?
● How can you **continue** to grow to increase your awareness about these topics?
● How can you **stop** perpetuating a system you might have been unaware of to increase access for neurodivergent folks at CSU?
Neuroinclusive Supervision
What are some barriers for folks in the workplace?
Areas affected

- Day-to-day interactions
- Hiring
- Feedback, both informal and formal cycles
- Retention
- Promotions
- Evaluation cycles
Formal and Informal Feedback
Why is feedback so important?
How to receive feedback

- Get in the practice of asking for ongoing feedback
- Do some self-work around not making it personal
- Embrace a growth mindset
- Ask clarifying questions
- If someone gives you vague feedback, ask what the action is attached to telling you this
How to give feedback

- Ask if the person is in the head space to hear it
- Focus on process not person
- Be clear and consistent
- Provide examples
- Give actionable feedback. Vague feedback won’t give a neurodivergent person enough to make necessary adjustments.
  - This goes for anyone not just neurodivergent folks.
Strategies to Counteract
Strategies

- Self-education of awareness gaps
- Consider access needs to programming
- Challenge personal language use
- Do a 21-day challenge to raise consciousness of ableism
- Follow disabled creators and listen
- Seek out learnings and opportunities
  - Disability Pride Month (July)
  - Disability Employment Awareness Month (Oct)
Strategies

- Center lived experiences of Black, Brown, Queer, Disabled people
- Use universal design for learning
- Challenge our own assumptions of disability including judgements we make about others
- Review policies and practices to ensure not ableist or perpetuating old models (documentation, absences, lateness)
- Assess current structures
- Listen to disabled voices about physical barriers
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Structural strategies

- Do you do 1:1s? Think about them, have a plan and share the agenda
- Working with me documents
- Evaluate language
- Evaluate in collaboration with partners to ensure that UDL is used
- Provide equity in processes including hiring, evaluations (rubrics and competency based)
- Provide hybrid options
- Be clear about expectations and embed flexibility in where possible
Breakout Groups
Breakout groups

1. What has this session made you reevaluate?
2. Are there areas you can address today in terms of supervision?
3. Anything sticking out to you that is inaccessible in your practices?
4. How can you create a more inclusive environment for your staff?
5. Are there long terms actions you can take?
Centering Neurodivergence in Programming
What do you think barriers to inclusion are in programming?
Barriers to Inclusion

- Noise
- Smell
- Physical space
- Lack of spoons
- Not resourced enough
- Not accessible
General strategies

- Think about sensory needs outside of your own
- Provide sensory / stim toys
- Think about giving instructions that it’s a fragrance free environment
- Consider physical spaces and accessibility/noise
- Provide as much information upfront as possible
- Allow for hybrid options, where applicable
- Consider different programming (silent disco room when there’s a drag show somewhere else? Somehow get captions for speakers, provide transcripts, have a zen room, etc)
General strategies

● Avoid assuming that someone doesn’t want to be included, if there are options, folks might surprise you
● Give headphones for concerts or loud activities
● Encourage folks to take care of their needs during activities (bathroom, water, standing, stretching, eating)
● Provide paper and pens
Some language tips

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Case Studies

Brainstorm some programs in your small groups, think about ways to make it accessible to all folks including neurodivergent individuals.

1. Who
2. What
3. When
4. Where
5. How

Run through thinking about as many perspectives you can
Creating Neuroaffirming Classrooms
Universal Design for Learning
# Universal Design for Learning Guidelines

## I. Provide Multiple Means of Representation

1. Provide options for perception:
   1.1 Offer ways of customizing the display of information
   1.2 Offer alternatives for auditory information
   1.3 Offer alternatives for visual information

2. Provide options for language, mathematical expressions, and symbols:
   2.1 Clarify vocabulary and symbols
   2.2 Clarify syntax and structure
   2.3 Support decoding of text, mathematical notation, and symbols
   2.4 Promote understanding across languages
   2.5 Illustrate through multiple media

3. Provide options for comprehension:
   3.1 Activate or supply background knowledge
   3.2 Highlight patterns, critical features, big ideas, and relationships
   3.3 Guide information processing, visualization, and manipulation
   3.4 Maximize transfer and generalization

## II. Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression

4. Provide options for physical action:
   4.1 Vary the methods for response and navigation
   4.2 Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies

5. Provide options for expression and communication:
   5.1 Use multiple media for communication
   5.2 Use multiple tools for construction and composition
   5.3 Build fluencies with graduated levels of support for practice and performance

6. Provide options for executive functions:
   6.1 Guide appropriate goal-setting
   6.2 Support planning and strategy development
   6.3 Facilitate managing information and resources
   6.4 Enhance capacity for monitoring progress

## III. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement

7. Provide options for recruiting interest:
   7.1 Optimize individual choice and autonomy
   7.2 Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity
   7.3 Minimize threats and distractions

8. Provide options for sustaining effort and persistence:
   8.1 Heighten salience of goals and objectives
   8.2 Vary demands and resources to optimize challenge
   8.3 Foster collaboration and community
   8.4 Increase mastery-oriented feedback

9. Provide options for self-regulation:
   9.1 Promote expectations and beliefs that optimize motivation
   9.2 Facilitate personal coping skills and strategies
   9.3 Develop self-assessment and reflection

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**Resourceful, knowledgeable learners**

**Strategic, goal-directed learners**

**Purposeful, motivated learners**

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Universal Learning Design

- **Representation:** UDL emphasizes the importance of providing multiple means of representing information, or the “what” of learning. When designing lessons, teachers can consider the ways that information is displayed and how it will be consumed by students, providing alternatives for students with visual and auditory differences. Additionally, teachers should account for differences in vocabulary, reading level, and language proficiency, offering multimedia options where possible. Finally, teachers should consider barriers to students’ comprehension, providing scaffolds and supports that will help students construct knowledge from new information.

- **Action and Expression:** This category focuses on the “how” of learning - the ways that students interact with and respond to the content. UDL suggests that teachers vary the ways that students can respond to questions, offer a variety of options and tools to interact with and reflect on new information, and that they offer differentiated supports in terms of helping students manage complex or multi-step tasks.

- **Engagement:** Finally, there’s the “why” of learning - what motivates students to engage with a task. The UDL framework guides teachers to recruit student interest by offering choices and making learning relevant to their personal experiences, to create a sense of community that draws students in, and to create a classroom culture that encourages students to take ownership of their learning and maintain a growth mindset.
Specific Curriculum Strategies
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Individual action

● What’s one thing you can **start** doing to combat ableism and neurotypical thinking patterns?

● How can you **continue** to grow to increase your awareness about these topics?

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Centering Neurodivergence in Policies
Policy Review

Is there a policy you’d like to look at or review?
Language in Policy

Problematic: Normal/healthy person
Preferred: Person without a disability

Problematic: Mental disability
Preferred: Mental health

Problematic: Hearing impaired/suffering from hearing loss
Preferred: Person who is deaf or hard of hearing

Problematic: The disabled/handicapped
Preferred: Disabled, a person with disabilities
Strategies
Case Studies

In your small groups, what are some policies that come to mind that may be exclusive? Brainstorm ways to make it accessible to all folks including neurodivergent individuals.

- Is there a checklist or something you can use to ensure policies are accessible beyond the ADA?
- Are there campus partners you can lean on to ask questions to measure inclusion?

Run through thinking about as many perspectives you can