



DIVERSE LEARNERS

S E R I E S

Diversity Toolbox – Summary

In this segment you learned how to expand your “toolbox” of strategies to help support diverse learners.

Diverse Learners are:

People from widely different backgrounds with different cultural and ethnic heritages, learning styles, and personal needs.

Universal Strategies for Supporting Diverse Learners

- Avoid Making Assumptions! -
 - Don’t let a label define the person.
 - Remember that every learner is different.
 - Don’t assume members of the same group (race, disability etc.) are the same.
- Recognize Stress -
 - Most diverse learners have a higher baseline of stress than typical students.
 - Pay attention to what is being asked of the student, their understanding of tasks and how you are instructing.
- Focus on Strengths -
 - Don’t let what isn’t working be your focus.
 - Keep what the student is able to do in the center of your thinking.
 - Consider student differences as a potential asset.
 - When a student is struggling check your instructional approach.
- Focus on building self-esteem and confidence -
 - Help students recognize times when they are successful.
 - Create opportunities for success.
- Promote Independence -
 - Independence will look different for each student.
 - Only give help when it is needed and for how long it is needed.

Strategies That Support Behavioral Success

1. Keep the function of behavior in mind -
 - See behavior as a form of communication: What is the student’s behavior telling you?
 - See behavior as a form of coping: Behavior can be an attempt to cope with something a person does not understand or that does not match their cultural history.
 - Provide different ways for diverse learners to communicate with you. Don’t rely only on your preferred method (e.g. email, text, or telephone).
 - Check in frequently with students about how they are doing.



DIVERSE LEARNERS

S E R I E S

- Help diverse students learn the most adaptive ways to cope with their school environment.
2. Ask yourself “What’s behind the behavior?” Consider the impact of culture, language, disability, life experience (and other factors) when interpreting the behavior of diverse learners. Diverse learners may have different perceptions and understandings of verbal and non-verbal information or expectations. Here are some things you can do -
- Don’t be surprised or defensive about behavior that seems unusual. Take time to see the student’s perspective.
 - Check in frequently to see how a student is interpreting what you say or things that happen in the class. Clarify and explain as needed.
 - Be aware of how your behavioral expectations are shaped by the dominant culture in our society and how they might be different for diverse learners.
 - Recognize how mainstream expectations may not be a good match for a student’s cultural or ethnic heritage or disability.
3. Ask yourself “What am I expecting from the student?” Many of our expectations reflect the dominant, white middle class culture. Here are some ways you can help students with behavioral expectations -
- Learn all you can about students before correcting them.
 - Set appropriate expectations for behavior.
 - Do not expect immediate conformity to mainstream culture –(or possibly at all).
 - Maintain clear communication of behavioral expectations.
 - Teach ways to adapt to and learn about different sets of expectations.

Strategies that Support Successful Learning

- Be Flexible: Diverse learners have different learning needs: provide opportunities to learn in ways that match the learning style, motivation and interests of the learner. One size does not fit all.
- Consider the student’s background and history: Use instructional materials that build on a student’s community, culture, language and personal history.



DIVERSE LEARNERS

S E R I E S

- Focus on active not passive learning – that means involving learners in the learning process, and avoiding situations where they are passive participants (i.e. sitting and listening). Don't be someone who gives out information. Teach students *how to learn*.

- Provide experiences
- Invite dialogue
- Connect learning to what is relevant to student.
- Get students involved.

- Don't set expectations based on the name of a student's disability or something you know about him or her.

- Avoid setting low expectations – Diverse Learners can learn as well as anyone else.
 - Trouble achieving in the classroom does not necessarily mean a student has low capability.
 - Research shows teacher expectations are self-fulfilling prophecies – you get what you expect from a student.

- Make use of new technologies:
technologies are giving us new approaches that can help people who learn differently.

Mythbuster

MYTH: Diverse learners have lower achievement potential.

TRUTH: Diverse learners can succeed if educators maintain their expectations and use methods that are relevant to, and engage learners.

Go Do It !

This week, watch the way you convey expectations to the students you work with who are diverse learners. Do you expect the same from them as other students? Provide the same amount of help? Wait the same length of time for answers? Believe the same thing about the students' potential? Observe the many ways you convey your expectations to others and keep a list.