BRITISH COUNCIL

Toolkit for inclusive teaching strategies

Why do we need inclusive teaching strategies?

Module 1

Module 1: Why do we need inclusive teaching strategies?

🏁 Start here!

You have six sections to complete in Module 1:

- Introduction
- About the ‘Toolkit for inclusive teaching strategies’
- Principle 1: Take a proactive approach
- Principle 2: Understanding how ‘barriers’ affect progress
- Principle 3: A one-size-fits-all approach benefits no one
- Apply the strategies
- Put it into practice

Then we recommend you set up a group discussion to:

- Reflect on this module

🖉 Before you begin, we recommend that you get yourself a notebook for taking notes as you work through the toolkit.

Introduction

Why do we need a toolkit for inclusive teaching strategies?

Case study

Before we start, read the case study about Marco. Do you have any students like Marco in your classes?

Marco is a 14 year-old male student in your class. Marco often arrives late to your lesson with his camera off.

Marco regularly finds it difficult to organise and plan when to do his homework and often doesn't complete the work.

When presenting language, Marco often appears bored or uninterested. He sometimes doesn't appear to understand instructions or tasks.

Marco doesn't enjoy reading long texts but can speak well in class. Marco is sociable, and can be very creative in group settings.

What does the case study tell us about why we need inclusive teaching strategies?

As teachers, I'm sure we agree that the participation, progress and success of all of our learners is important.

But the way our classrooms are traditionally set up (as a 'one-size-fits all' model) means some learners can feel excluded or experience barriers to learning.

Take Marco for example. He's a sociable, creative, talkative teenager, but seems to struggle with organisation and punctuality.

Clearly, something about our approach isn't working for him. How can we help him fulfil his potential?

About the ‘Toolkit for inclusive teaching strategies’

Who is this toolkit for?

This toolkit is designed for language teachers in remote teaching contexts who may be asking themselves…

- How can I help learners like Marco to participate more?
- How can I support learners with Special Education Needs (“SEN”)?
- How can I make my classroom more inclusive?

The focus in the toolkit is on **teaching strategies.** As teachers, it's our responsibility to set up the conditions where all learners, like Marco, can succeed and thrive.

Make a note of a question you have about your own remote teaching practice.

How can I _____?

How does this toolkit help?

This toolkit aims to provide you with practical strategies to help learners access, participate and progress in your classroom.

This toolkit has been created with Special Education Needs (“SEN”) at the centre, and borrows many strategies from SEN specific interventions. These strategies will be good for learners with SEN, whether diagnosed or not, and will help remove barriers that other learners may face for different reasons. By providing a range of ways in which to ‘succeed,’ we can create richer learning experiences for all learners.

You don’t need to be an expert in SEN to create a more inclusive learning environment for learners. In fact, you may have already used some of the strategies we recommend in this toolkit!

How do you use this toolkit?

The toolkit is made up of seven modules, each with principles and strategies for making your practice more inclusive. The modules do not need to be completed in order. Start with the module you feel will be most impactful for your context.

Module 1: Why do we need inclusive teaching strategies?
Module 2: How to manage the environment for everybody
Module 3: How to give inclusive instructions
Module 4: How to set up inclusive interactions
Module 5: How to better present information for different needs
Module 6: How to differentiate learning online
Module 7: How to build belonging online

Each module is divided into self-study, application and a group discussion. Throughout each module we encourage you to:

- make notes to use in the small group discussion
- try out the strategies in an upcoming lesson
- reflect on the benefits and challenges of using the strategies.

To get the most from this toolkit, we recommend that you partake in a group discussion at the end of each module. A group discussion will help you reflect on the strategies and your wider teaching practice. Group discussion is a powerful way to share ideas and build a sense of community and accountability around inclusivity at your school. If you're not able to join a group discussion in your context, many of the final activities can also be completed alone as reflection and review tasks.

Speak to the person responsible for professional development training within your organisation to set this up, or self-organise into groups with other teachers who would be interested.

Are you ready to start?

Take out your notebook. As you go through this module, take notes on:

- What inclusive strategies you already use
- Why we recommend these strategies
- What other small improvements you can make to create a more inclusive practice in your classroom

Principles and strategies

Read three principles that help create a more inclusive mindset toward the classroom.

Principle 1: Take a proactive approach

Before you begin this section make a note on the following questions:

- Does your school already have guidelines for inclusive teaching?
- If so, do you use them? How?

This toolkit takes a proactive approach to inclusivity. By thinking ahead about potential barriers, you will be able to anticipate and plan for the challenges your learners face.

This toolkit will help you create a more inclusive classroom as standard; meaning you are anticipating and planning for needs in advance, rather than having to react impossibly fast when new requirements come to your attention.

A proactive approach to inclusive teaching aims to celebrate diversity in the classroom and can help all learners, including Marco, achieve their potential, despite differences.

By creating more inclusive learning experiences we can reach more learners, move away from practices that are damaging to certain learners, and allow learners to participate more fully.

Prepare to discuss:

- How much additional planning do you think it takes to be more inclusive?
- What are the consequences for your learners of not adopting inclusive teaching practices?

Principle 2: Understanding how ‘barriers’ affect progress

Before you begin this section make a note on the following question:

- What learning barriers will you encounter (e.g. lack of time, low motivation) as you work through this toolkit?

A ‘barrier’ is something that gets in the way of a learner being successful.

An inclusive approach means thinking not only about the classroom or course, but about learners’ wider contexts and what barriers they may face.

Learning barriers might be physical, cultural, cognitive, emotional, or system-wide. Potential barriers your learners might be facing could be:

- lack of access to a device
- lack of time
- loud or unstable learning environment
- low motivation
- reduced working memory
- anxiety
- low confidence
- lack of previous knowledge.

Many of our activities, tasks and methods feel ‘normal’ because that’s the way we’ve always done it, but walking in the shoes of our learners can help us surface existing barriers in the traditional models of education.

The online environment may reduce the impact of some barriers (e.g. allowing for self-paced learning, or creating opportunities for new forms of input and output), but it’s important to be aware of how different remote learning contexts may affect learners.

Prepare to discuss:

- What barriers do your learners face in your context?
- What has caused these barriers to exist?

Principle 3: A one-size-fits-all approach benefits no one

Before you begin this section make a note on the following questions:

- Do all of your learners learn the same way?
- What are some ways in which they are different from each other?

One--size--fits--all thinking is the idea that there is an 'average learner.'

Throughout history, this kind of thinking has excluded many learners from realising their potential. Understanding, planning for and valuing the variability and neurodiversity of all learners matters.

As teachers we aim to act for the best interests of our learners, but we all come to the classroom with our own biases. Biases can be negative, (for example, 'learners with poor writing skills are less smart') or positive ('I love having learners from X social group. They're always great students!').

Either way, if we use our own abilities and biases (for example, 'learners from this area are better at maths', or 'learners who don't talk a lot aren't as smart') as a starting point for lesson planning, we end up with classes that unintentionally exclude some learners.

The strategies suggested throughout this toolkit aim to shift the focus away from correcting weaknesses, to playing to learners' strengths. When we consider the range of different needs in our classrooms, we anticipate the strengths and diversity of all learners.

Prepare to discuss:

- What are some of the benefits of celebrating diversity in your classroom?
- What are some of the challenges?

Check your understanding

Read about four common teaching decisions that may inadvertently cause barriers for your learners. What possible options, or variations, could you include in your planning to remove or reduce potential barriers?

The teacher has decided to use	Potential barrier faced by learners because of this decision	Possible options or variations to remove or reduce potential barriers
1. A 15 minute timed test	Unable to make decisions fast enough to participate	*Set as untimed homework*
2. A printed handout	Low vision learner can't adjust size of text	
3. A live class debate	Lack of confidence in speaking, anxious about offering opinions	
4. A written essay task	Learners with phonological processing difficulties	

👏 Nice work. You're done for today! Your next task is to meet your group to discuss your ideas from the module.

Example answers: 2, Provide digital versions capable of zoom. 3, Set as group work with options for participating such as one learner writes and another speaks. 4, Provide different options for output like audio and video.

Reflect on the module as a group

Welcome to your first group discussion. This is a self-facilitated peer-learning session. Please follow the guide to go through the activities. Nominate a person for each letter A, B, C or D.

When it is your turn, lead the activity by reading the instructions aloud to the group and ask any questions. See below for details of each activity.

Note: The group discussion is a powerful way to share ideas and build a sense of community and accountability around inclusivity at your school. However if you're not able to join a group discussion in your context, the activities can also be completed alone as reflection and review tasks.

Activity leader	**Activity name**	**Time**
Teacher A	Check in and introductions	Ten minutes
Teacher B	Group review	Ten minutes
Teacher C	Case study	15 minutes
Teacher D	Group reflection	15 minutes

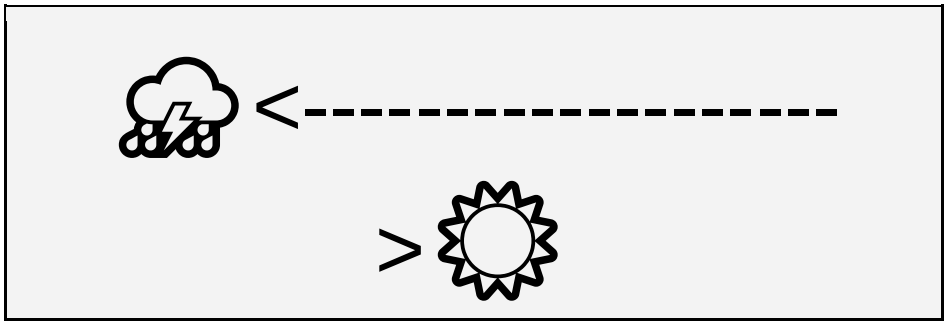
Check in and introduction - led by Teacher 'A'

Before you begin, prepare for the session with a 'check in'. A check in is a short pause at the beginning of a meeting to reflect on how you feel at this moment.

It might be that you have just had a very stressful class, or maybe you were running late today and feel in a rush. Sharing with the group helps to build empathy. When we have shared we are ready to begin the discussion.

Take a moment to answer the following prompt: Choose a point on the line that shows how you feel today (and why)? Then introduce yourself: tell the group your name and share which point on the weather line you have chosen and why.

Spend about ten minutes on this section.



For example, *I feel like I'm closer to sunshine because I had a great lesson this morning,* or *my car broke down this morning on the way to work so I'm quite close to the rain cloud.*

Review - led by Teacher ‘B’

Choose a principle from the module and take turns and tell each other one or two things about each principle. Spend about ten minutes on this section.

Principle 1: Take a proactive approach
Principle 2: Understanding how ‘barriers’ affect progress
Principle 3: A one-size-fits-all approach benefits no one

Case study - led by Teacher ‘C’

Read the case study about Marco again. Can you recognise any signs that Marco may not be feeling included? Spend about 15 minutes on this section.

Marco is a 14 year-old male student in your class. Marco often arrives late to your lesson with his camera off.

Marco regularly finds it difficult to organise and plan when to do his homework and often doesn’t complete the work.

When presenting language, Marco often appears bored or uninterested. He sometimes doesn’t appear to understand instructions or tasks.

Marco doesn’t enjoy reading long texts but can speak well in class. Marco is sociable, and can be very creative in group settings.

Now, discuss the following questions:

1. How do you think Marco **feels** in the class? What kind of emotions might Marco have when coming to class?
2. Have **you** ever felt like Marco in a learning situation? What were the reasons?
3. Do you have any learners similar to Marco in your class? What strategies do you use?
4. How do you think these strategies would benefit the **other** learners in your class as well?

Group reflection - led by Teacher ‘D’

Discuss the following reflection questions from the module as a group. Spend about 15 minutes on this section.

1. In this module you learned about taking a proactive approach. In your context, how much additional planning do you think it takes to be more inclusive?

   What are the consequences for your learners of not adopting inclusive teaching practices?
2. What barriers do your learners face in your context? What has caused these barriers to exist?
3. What are some of the benefits of celebrating diversity in your classroom? What are some of the challenges?

💻 **If you're interested in this topic check out the links for further reading:**

- Teacher: A one-size-fits-all approach to instruction is stifling our classrooms. (2016). *The Washington Post*. [online] 23 Dec. Available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/answer-sheet/wp/2016/12/23/teacher-a-one-size-fits-all-approach-to-instruction-is-stifling-our-classrooms.
- Ciuffetelli Parker, D. and Conversano, P. (2021). Narratives of Systemic Barriers and Accessibility: Poverty, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and the Call for a Post-Pandemic New Normal. *Frontiers in Education*, 6. doi:10.3389/feduc.2021.704663. Available at: https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/feduc.2021.704663/full.