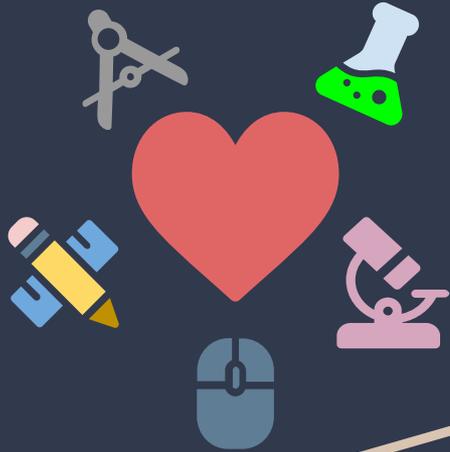# Classroom Structures that Promote Equity

Hal Huntsman, Mathematics Instructor, Antelope Valley College

Some things I assume

- Inequity is systemic and structural, so addressing inequity must also be systemic and structural.

- Policies and practices affect the success of our students.

- We all care about our students and their success, and we are here because we want to make our course more equitable.

Some things I assume

- We all have ideas and experience that can inform the process.

- Addressing structure is a beginning, but it is not enough.

- Questioning ourselves and our practices is powerful.

Some things I am not saying

- I have all the answers.

- My policies and practices are more equitable than yours.

- There's a right way and a wrong way to be equitable.

- We ever finish this work.

The most important thing

The most important classroom structures are in our minds and hearts. When change ourselves, the structures that we create will also change.

Structures to make our courses more equitable

I'll focus on two main areas:

- Getting ready for our students -- course design

- Working with our students -- classroom practices

To be equitable, our policies and practices should be:

students receive about courses. What does your syllabi emphasize. is it content - or learning-centered?

- Accurate -- grades should validly reflect student achievement; we should say what we mean and follow through with practice;

- Bias-resistant -- explicitly counter negative stereotypes and prevent subjective, structural, and institutional bias;

- Motivational -- increase students' desire to learn and their sense that they can control their learning.

(Apapted from *Grading for Equity*, by Joe Feldman)

Examples

- Assessments

- Weighted averages and where the weight should be

- Averaging grades

- Rigor

- Penalizing late work

Questions to ask

- How does our course design perpetuate inequity and the status quo?

- Which students are advantaged and which disadvantaged through our course design?

- Does the policy/practice reward students for behavior, or for demonstrating their understanding, or both?

More Questions
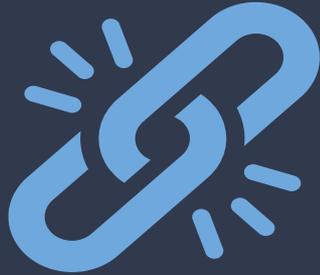
- Does the policy/practice implicitly tell students that we expect them to be poor students and not to succeed?

- Does the policy/practice create barriers for poor students or those without other material advantages?

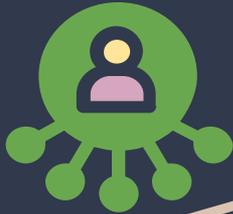- Does the policy/practice promote product or process?

# Creating equity through practice

Some important moves:

- Create community structurally;
- Make students feel like they belong in the space.

Build engagement and community

- Do something on the first day and everyday to make space for each student's voice into the classroom.
  - Signal that you value and respect them and their ideas.
  - Make learning visible.

- Use collaborative classwork or quizzes.
  - Build community.
  - Create opportunities for them to learn from each other.
  - Make learning visible.

Show up for your students
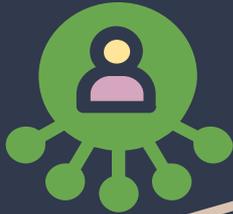
- Hold office hours in a student space, like a learning center, cultural space, or cafeteria.
- Less formal and leads to more interaction.
- Allows students to sit nearby and work on their homework. They can call on you when they need you.
- Learn who in student services areas you can direct students to.

Welcome and respect students

- Warmly welcome students to class by name, every day
- Give validating messages that affirm ability and promote effort
- Know and use student names
- Critique privately and praise publicly
- Discuss challenges you've experienced and overcome
- Connect students with people, not programs

Adapted from a list by Dr. J. Luke Wood, which I snapped picture of at a conference session

Have you considered an inclusivity statement?

- Diversity and inclusion statement
- Curricular statement
- Respect for diversity statement
- English language statement
- Land acknowledgements
- Wellness statement

Cultural Connection and Belonging

Example:
Scientist Spotlights
by Jeff Schinske

Scientist Spotlights Findings
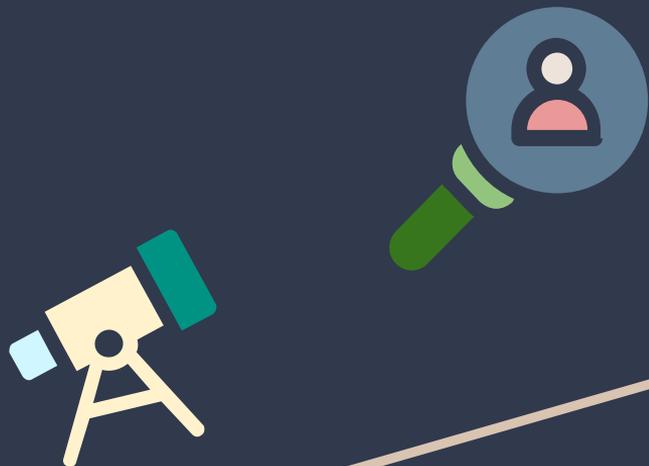
- Scientist Spotlights shifted students' descriptions of scientists toward non-stereotypical descriptions.
- Scientist Spotlights enhanced students' ability to see their possible selves in science by enhancing their ability to relate to scientists.
- Shifts in scientist stereotypes and relatability of scientists correlated with students' interest in science.
- Shifts in scientist stereotypes and relatability of scientists correlated with course grades.

Resources

- **An Equity-minded Syllabus**
  https://sites.google.com/view/anequity-mindedsyllabus/home

- **Belonging**
  https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/regions/northwest/pdf/social-emotional-learning.pdf

- **Fabiola Torres' Puente: An Equity Minded Syllabus**
  https://sites.google.com/view/anequity-mindedsyllabus/home

- **Fabiola Torres' Digital Cookies**
  https://sites.google.com/view/puente-digital-cookie-jar-2021/home

- ***Grading for Equity***, by Joe Feldman
  https://gradingforequity.org

- **Hal's Journey with Late Homework (see p. 12)**
  https://www.cmc3.org/about/news/newsletters/newsletter_spring_2021.pdf

- **Inclusivity Statements**
  https://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/inclusive-teaching/statements

- **Teaching Men of Color in Community College**, by Dr. J. Luke Wood
  https://www.amazon.com/Teaching-Men-Color-Community-College/dp/0744229529

- **The effect of STEM faculty beliefs on student success**
  https://advances.sciencemag.org/content/5/2/eaau4734

- **Scientist Spotlight Initiative** https://scientistspotlights.org/

- **University of Hawaii, College of Education, Ethnomathematics Curriculum Library** https://coe.hawaii.edu/ethnomath/curricula/

Thank you!
Questions?

Please feel free to be in touch with me. I love to be in community with other educators as we go through our journey to more effectively support our students.

Hal: shuntsman1@avc.edu