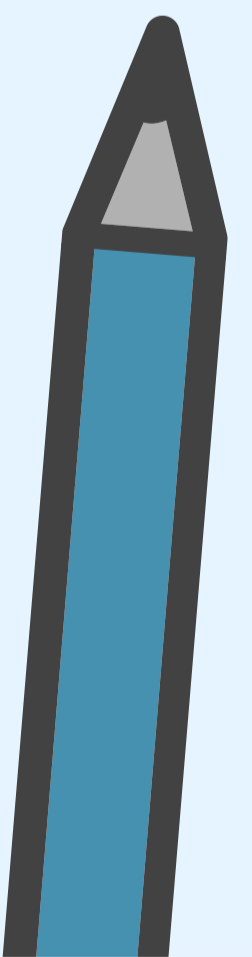
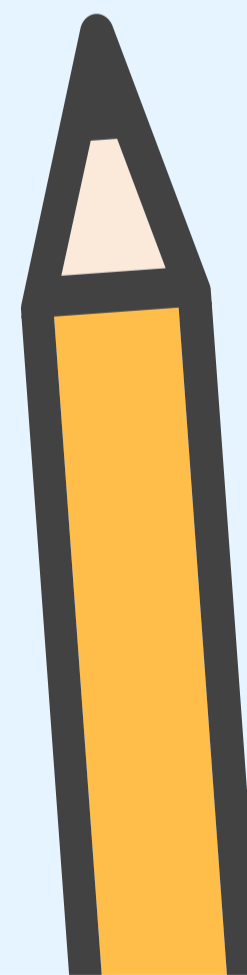
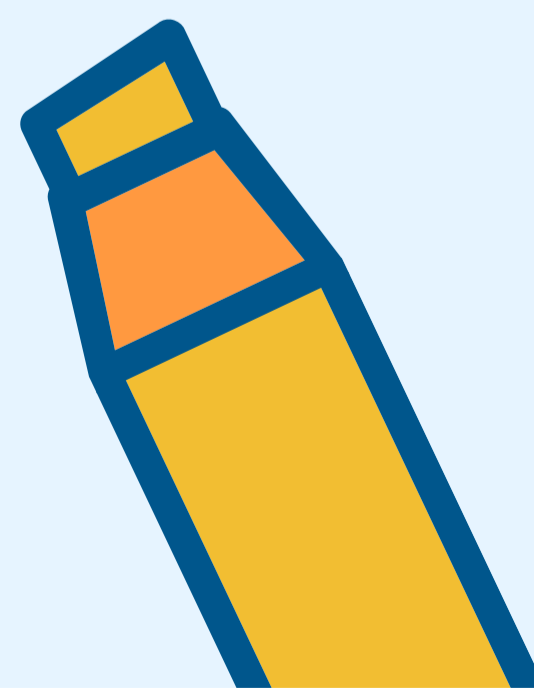
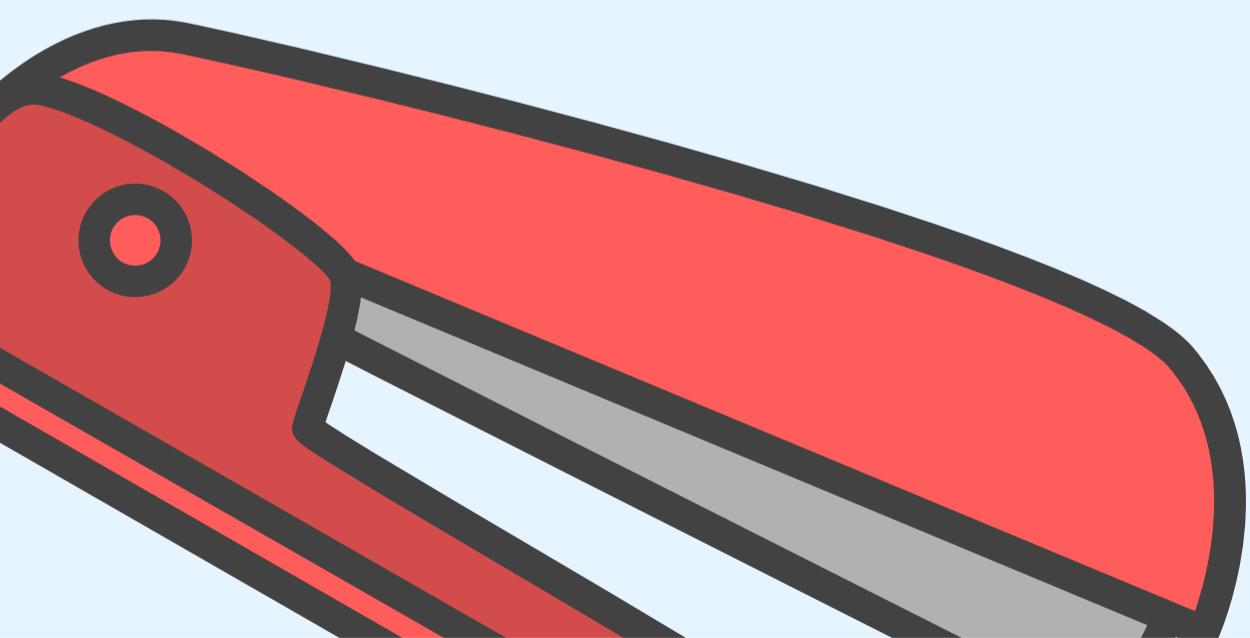


CONNECTED EDUCATION
EVERY LEADER, EVERY
TEACHER, EVERY LEARNER

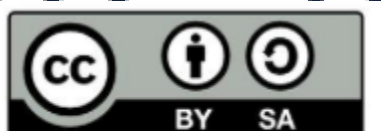
BRIDGE
LINKING INNOVATORS IN EDUCATION



BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM



A BRIDGE Knowledge Product



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LINKING INNOVATORS IN EDUCATION

There is an increasing awareness that while the structures and struggles of wider society impact the classroom, society is also formed in the classroom. Teachers have an invaluable role to play in increasing inclusivity, compassion, and social justice in wider society by making sure their classrooms are inclusive, safe spaces in which every learner feels included and validated. This also has a hugely positive impact on learning, ensuring that every child, regardless of background, benefits from the learning process. This document examines some of the first steps towards cultivating an understanding of the teacher's role in building an inclusive classroom.

As a teacher/education practitioner, take 5 minutes to consider the following:

- Think back to your own time as a learner:
- Can you recall a moment in your own schooling experience when you felt included, engaged, appreciated, or validated in the learning process?
- Can you recall a time when you were in school and felt invalidated, alienated, excluded?

How long did it take to find the good memory? At the Axis Summit, when asked, one participant confessed that he was still trying to find a good memory of his experience as a learner! When asked how long it took for participants to remember the bad experiences from their schooling, many responded, "like lightning".

What does this indicate? Are we making our classrooms as inclusive and positive a space as they can be? How do we ensure we do not re-enact negative patterns we experienced as pupils ourselves?

Part of this is recognizing when we're leaving learners behind: Many teachers tend to focus their attention on the "high achievers" or those with the most potential to achieve high marks – but in doing that they exclude children who may not fit the mould of academic success. Often, these are actually the children with the most potential to flourish given the right attention.

A strategy to consider is the **MATCH** method:

Modify the task

- Fit the task to the learners' level of understanding
- Use a different technique to explain: consider storytelling, problem-solving, etc
- Comfort the learners regarding their understanding, and then set up a challenge to better that understanding

Alter expectations

- Watch the learners' progress. If you have a large number of learners, use index cards and a clipboard with a register to make notes on individual learners that you can check in with later
- Listen. Set up groups of learners that you can meet with on a rotating basis to share feedback, questions, and further discussion of the material.
- Engage with learners
- Experiment: what are some new ways to approach the material? How can we put learners' knowledge to the test?
- Meet learners where they are
- Reach out to learners who are having difficulty
- Do not be afraid to ask your learners for feedback on your lessons! This helps you see what works and what doesn't. Reflect. Remember that teaching is not an event, but a

process.

Teach strategies

- The best strategies are based on research
- Review the last lesson
- Present new information in small doses
- Discuss as you teach
- Provide models for problem-solving and learning
- Provide scaffolds and tools, such as charts, cue cards, etc
- Review

Change the environment

- Add or decrease stimulating visuals
- Move learners to where they will learn best (e.g. move a daydreamer from the window seat, etc.)
- Partner with "working learners" to help others to become engaged in the lesson
- Create a system of accountability – write names on slips and draw randomly to answer questions – that way nobody can afford to be anonymous, and you can make sure you get to check on every child's progress and understanding.
- In situations where you don't have your own space:
There are ways of talking to management or adapting – consider making a fold-out board, or displays that can be easily transported.

Building inclusivity in the classroom goes further than simple learning practice, however. We need to remember that schooling does not exist in a vacuum but in a complex social context. Classrooms and schools are often made up of groups of people from varying social, economic, cultural, racial, and religious backgrounds.

As a teacher, consider some of the following:

How have I been privileged by society?

And how have I been marginalised?

- Did I grow up in a household that had adequate food, water, shelter, etc?
- Were my parents or guardians educated and employed?
- Do I ever have to worry about being victimized or hurt based on my race, gender, or sexual orientation?
Am I able-bodied?

So, how can we as teachers negotiate these different levels of privilege in order to make our classrooms as inclusive as possible? This means asking ourselves:

- What kind of assumptions am I making when I speak to my learners? (e.g. setting an assignment on “my holiday” and expecting everyone to write about going on a trip when some learners may have had to stay at home, or work to help their families, etc.)
- What kind of language do I use in explaining or discussing? For example, assuming that all learners have parents, or that all learners’ parents are heterosexual couples.
- As a teacher how do I overcome my own issues/opinions/baggage and not drown out my learners’ thoughts, feelings, etc.? For example, even if I believe homosexuality to be wrong, or strange, how do I keep this from making a homosexual learner feel victimized, embarrassed, or hurt? Why do I believe the things I do? How can I challenge my privileges in order to be more compassionate and inclusive of others?
- How do I create a space where a learner can broach difficult topics, talk about difficult things and still feel safe?

Most importantly, ask yourself: Why did I become a teacher? How can I be more intentional about the decisions I make as a teacher, to make my learners feel safe, validated, and equipped to deal with the world?

A classroom social skills programme is the cornerstone of a respectful and productive learning environment. By guiding learners in the development of their social skills, teachers can support and encourage communication between learners, growth of confidence, and socially responsible behaviour.

Remember that diversity comes in building a culture that includes everyone. Inclusion in our classrooms, schools,

For resources that will help you foster inclusivity in your classroom, click [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#).