

Inclusivity in the Secondary English Classroom: An Inclusive Teaching Guide

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Introduction

Prior to taking this course, my experience with inclusive teaching was very limited. As a result, I have only recently begun to question my own thoughts and attitudes toward inclusivity. While creating this guide I looked back on my own high school experience, which was not very inclusive. Because I attended a private, college preparatory school, there was very little diversity in respect to both socio-economic status and student needs and abilities. All of the English courses I took were lecture style with very little collaboration among students. At the time, I enjoyed this “college-style” type of classroom, but I can now certainly see how alienating this must have been for many students.

After spending the past few weeks thinking about inclusivity, my vision for my future classroom looks very different than it once did. I now envision a classroom in which students of varying abilities and needs can work together in collaborative ways. While I have always acknowledged the importance of classroom community, creating this guide has allowed me to better articulate exactly how I plan to make each of my students feel welcome and cared for and how to address each of their needs.

While creating this guide I kept in mind not only the material on inclusivity that I have read and discussed in this course, but also the materials from my English methods courses. The current best practices in English Language Arts coincide perfectly with inclusive teaching. An emphasis on collaboration, multimodality, and promoting literacy through multiple intelligences has been present throughout my methods courses. Creating this guide has allowed me to visualize how an inclusive secondary English classroom might look. That vision is described and reflected upon in the following guide.

Partnering with Families

Partnering with families is an essential component of creating an inclusive classroom. Peterson and Hittie (2010) argue that a family-centered approach to learning is superior to system-centered and child-centered approaches (p. 188). In a family-centered approach, “the child is considered in the context of the entire family” (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 188). Meetings are scheduled at the family’s convenience and teachers and support staff strive to give support and assistance to families (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 188). Rather than focusing only on what is convenient for teachers and support staff (as in the system-centered approach) or focusing only on the needs of the student (as in the child-centered approach) this approach understands that the needs of the entire family must be taken into consideration to ensure success for a student (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 190).

I, too, believe that a family-centered approach is the best and plan to implement the practices that are involved in this approach in my classroom. The first practice is to engage families as partners in their student’s education (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 191). From the very beginning of the school year, I will express to parents that, just like them, I want their students to succeed. I will let families know that I am committed to not only helping their students succeed in my class, but I am also committed to helping the students’ families find ways to help their students succeed. For an English class, this might mean helping students and families find leisure reading materials that will pique a student’s interest while also boosting his or her reading comprehension skills. The second practice of a family-centered approach to learning is to affirm and build on family strengths and gifts (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 191). This means instead of viewing families for their deficiencies or weaknesses, looking for ways in which families are supporting their students and acknowledging how families can use these strengths to further

support their students. The third practice is to honor cultural diversity of families (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 192). I think this is particularly important for English teachers as we work directly with language, literacy and culture. It is important to include works of literature from a variety of cultures and to create an atmosphere that not only values diversity, but also questions the dominant ideologies that are often present in traditional works of literature. Inviting students and their families to share their cultural experiences with the rest of the class is another way to honor diversity. The fourth practice of a family-centered approach to education is to treat families with respect and dignity (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 192). This involves being compassionate towards families who may be experiencing personal challenges or school-related challenges (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 192). I believe the best way to do this is to always be empathetic and understanding and to let families know that I am available to listen to their concerns, whether the concerns pertain to their student or not. The last practice is to promote family choices (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 192). I think this is a crucial step in building a partnership with families as it demonstrates that their opinions and input are valued, particularly when dealing with students' academic or behavioral difficulties.

I believe all of these practices of a family-centered approach can be achieved if communication with families is open and frequent. Brandvik and McKnight (2011) suggest a variety of methods for ensuring success when communicating with families. These include sending a welcome postcard or email before the school year begins and inviting families to a back-to-school night during which the teacher's philosophies and goals for the class are expressed (Brandvik & Mcknight, 2011, p. 246-8). One method that I certainly plan to use is to make phone calls or send emails out to draw attention to positive student achievements. Brandvik and McKnight point out that by communicating with families about positive student

behavior and achievement, a good relationship can be built and if problems do arise, they will be easier to bring up (p. 250). In my classroom, I plan to fully utilize technology to keep communication with families open, frequent, and positive. Many teachers utilize official school websites, such as Blackboard or Moodle, to post grades and update assignments. For English classrooms, I think it is also beneficial to create a class website that acts as a portfolio for student work. This not only shows that students' work is valued, but it allows families to observe the work their students are doing and feel more involved in their students' academic lives. Another way to utilize technology to enhance communication with families is through social media such as Facebook or Twitter. By creating a Facebook group or Twitter account for each class, teachers can update information on class projects and assignments, praise student achievements, and frequently let families know what is going on in class.

As Peterson and Hittie (2010) mention, for families of students with special needs, additional care should be taken to let families know that their students are welcome in our classroom (p. 194). All of the other mentioned practices, such as keeping communication open and frequent and valuing families' choices, are also essential in building partnerships with families of students with special needs. By working to create a classroom environment that treats each family as unique and valued, families of students with special needs are likely to feel welcome as well.

Classroom Design and Assistive Technology

Another important component of creating an inclusive classroom is the design of a classroom and assistive technology used in the classroom. In my classroom, I plan to utilize the concept of universal design. Peterson and Hittie (2010) describe universal design as a conceptual revolution that seeks to create products and environments that are usable by all people without the need for adaptation or specialized design (p. 218). They mention a few examples of universal design that I plan to use in my own classroom, such as talking software and audio books that can be used by all students, not just those with special needs (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 220). Talking software and audio books fall under the category of assistive technology, another important element in an inclusive classroom. According to Peterson and Hittie (2010), assistive technology is “technology that helps a person with special needs learn or perform a task he or she could not otherwise do” (p. 251).

In the room design that I created [Figure 1], the classroom is intended to adhere to the principles of universal design and to incorporate assistive technology for reading and writing, two skills that are used intensively in an English classroom. Each person who uses assistive technology should be matched with the tool that best serves their purpose, so my classroom is designed to accommodate a variety of assistive technologies (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 254). Because computers can be used in a variety of ways as assistive technology, my classroom design contains four computer stations. Stanberry and Raskind (2009) highlight some assistive technologies that can be used by students with various special needs who struggle with writing (p. 1). These include alternative keyboards with graphics to aid comprehension; graphic organizers to help students physically maneuver information into a coherent structure; proofreading software programs; speech recognition software programs; and word prediction

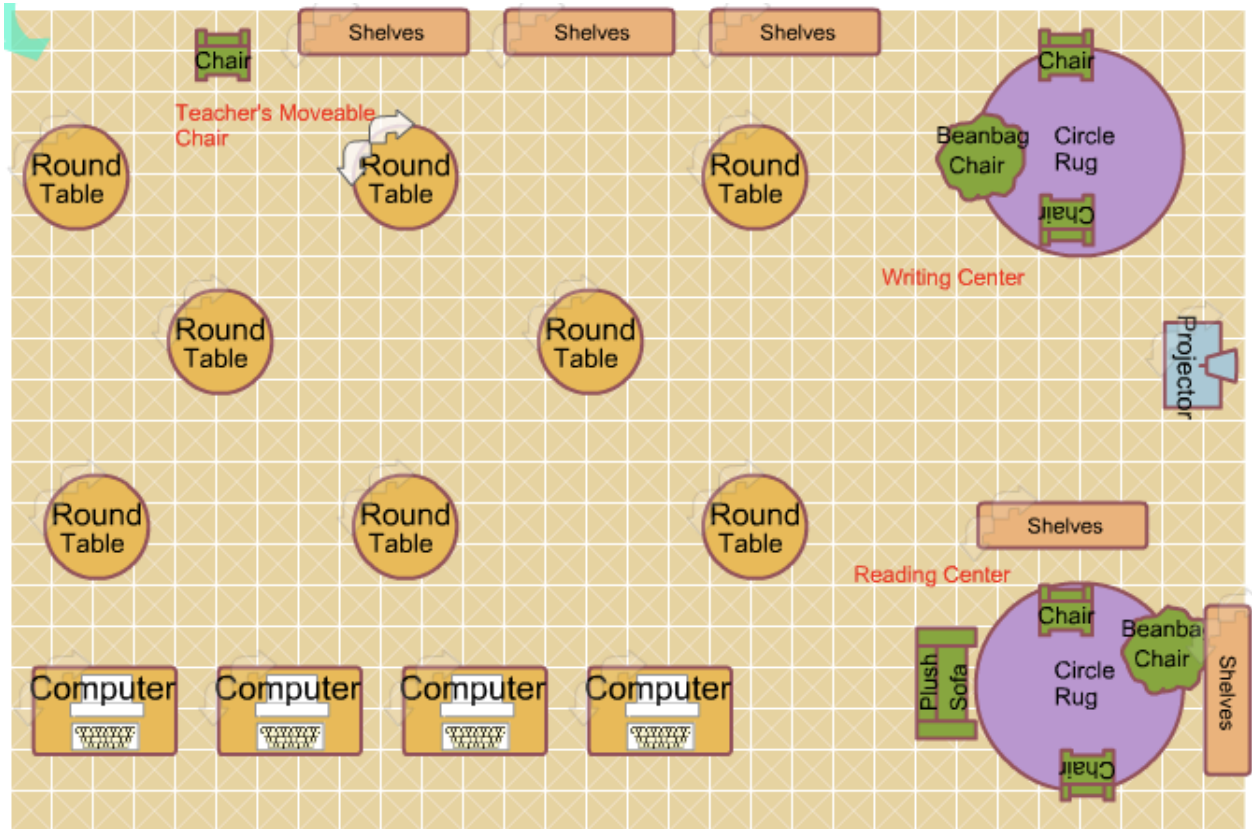
software programs (Stanberry & Raskind, 2009, p. 1). Stanberry and Raskind (2010) also highlight some assistive technologies that can be used by students with various special needs who struggle with reading (p. 1). These include audio books and publications for students to listen to in lieu of reading or to listen to as they read; optical character recognition, which allows a student to scan printed material which is then read aloud by a screen reading system; and speech synthesizers and screen readers that read aloud texts on a computer screen (Stanberry & Raskind, 2010, p. 1). The computers in my classroom will accommodate many of these technologies that aid students in reading and writing. The computer stations are situated near the student tables and allow students to face the rest of the classroom so that they can view the entire room and be more fully included.

Mobility is another aspect of universal design and inclusive environments. Instead of constricted rows, my classroom design has students seated in heterogeneous groupings at round tables with ample floor space to promote wheelchair accessibility. The round tables also encourage student interaction, an important component of an inclusive classroom (Peterson and Hittie, 2010, p. 233). The round tables can be used as activity centers during certain lessons and can easily be moved to create more floor space. Instead of working from a desk, I plan to interact with students, moving around their tables and the classroom. In place of a desk, my room design features a chair that can be moved around and shelving for resources and materials. One carpeted area of the classroom is surrounded by bookshelves and offers comfortable chairs and a couch for students to sit in. A second carpeted area is offered as a collaborative space or alternative writing area with comfortable chairs. By providing these alternative reading and writing areas, it is hoped that students will be able to work in an environment that is most comfortable and productive for them and an environment that suits their learning style and intelligences.

In addition to the more practical classroom design elements, Peterson and Hittie (2010) describe additional qualities of healthy learning environments. They mention that a classroom should be a place of joy, safe and aesthetically pleasing (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 220). I believe that round tables create a feeling of equality and foster collaboration among students. My classroom will be decorated with plants, student work, and inspiring and thought-provoking literary quotations. Books and media are also part of the design. Having bookshelves filled with general interest and young adult books is essential in an English classroom, as it promotes recreational reading and can spark students' imagination while writing. I believe there is also a place for music in an English classroom, as it can help students create a mood while writing, can enhance reading, or offer a calming break during class. Film and visual media are also important for aiding students' comprehension of material and in fostering creativity, so my room design also includes a projector.

By creating a stimulating, accessible, adaptive and comfortable classroom, I hope to be able to meet the needs of all of my students with as few modifications as possible. By anticipating different needs, strengths and learning styles, I hope to achieve a universal classroom design.

Figure 1 – My inclusive classroom design



Building Community and Responding to Behavioral Challenges

Building community and anticipating behavioral challenges are two more important components of creating an inclusive classroom. Peterson and Hittie (2010) question whether a school's purpose is to create competition or to create community (p. 278). Like the authors, I believe that the purpose of schools is to create community and this idea is at the heart of my teaching philosophy. The topics of building community and responding to behavioral challenges are introduced together because they depend upon each other in an inclusive school. Schools and classrooms with healthy and welcome communities are better able to handle behavioral challenges. Having fewer behavioral challenges in a school or classroom creates a healthier community.

Peterson and Hittie (2010) explain that a school or classroom community involves belonging, inclusion, support and care, contributions and responsibility of all members, democratic problem solving, and reaching out (p.280-1). There are many ways to build community in a classroom, such as involving students in goal-setting, having students establish classroom rules, developing meaningful relationships among classmates and teachers, and participating in respectful communication (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 292-7). I plan to incorporate these and other more English-specific community-building aspects into my own classroom. In high school courses it can be difficult to create a sense of community due to the relatively short class periods and number of interactions in a day. However, I believe an English classroom offers many unique opportunities for building community. Writing assignments that ask students to share their worldview or opinions are a great way to promote empathy and understanding among students. I agree with Peterson and Hittie (2010) that literature is also a powerful tool for helping students understand difference (p. 305). By reading about people from

other cultures, belief systems, socioeconomic groups, genders, and sexual identities, students can better understand their peers and become more compassionate toward them. Similarly, Peterson and Hittie (2010) discuss the importance of emotional intelligence and how it is essential to meet students' socio-emotional needs in addition to their academic needs (p. 285). The goal of the humanities, such as English, is directly related to this. The humanities help students become more compassionate and better understand their fellow human beings, while simultaneously sharpening their academic skills, such as critical thinking. A successful humanities course, such as English, will not only help students become more skilled writers and critical readers, but will help them become more thoughtful human beings.

Fully addressing students' needs is important not only for building community, but also for responding to behavioral challenges. Peterson and Hittie's (2010) approach to behavior is student-centered and focuses on helping students meet their needs rather than controlling their behavior. The authors suggest that teachers try to understand the underlying reasons why a student is acting out, rather than focusing on the behavior itself. Traditional behavioral management, which focuses on rewarding or reinforcing good behavior and punishing bad behavior, does not address needs or motivations behind behavior and is, therefore, not effective and can even be detrimental to students (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 315). I plan to instead use the positive behavioral support model, which is proactive and needs based (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 317). This approach directly addresses students' needs and requires positive relationship building with students. The authors note William Glasser's theory of five basic needs: survival, love and belonging, power, fun, and freedom (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 332-3). By creating a community that addresses these needs, I hope to be able to better address behavioral issues.

In addition to building a community that focuses on students' needs, I plan to additionally address behavior by using restorative justice in my classroom. With restorative justice, instead of arbitrarily punishing students, students are required to fix or heal whatever negative outcomes their behavior caused (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 324). Rather than segregating a student through detention or some other form of isolation, the student is given a chance to make amends and to be welcomed back into the community. I think this is a powerful way to handle behavior and one that helps meet the needs of all students, not just the students who are harmed by others' behavior. Through community building and positive behavioral support, my inclusive classroom will focus on the needs of all students.

Instructional Strategies

My inclusive classroom will utilize both reading and writing workshops. As Peterson and Hittie (2010) note, workshops are an important part of an inclusive classroom because they allow students of different levels and abilities to work together, yet each student is also motivated to set their own personal goals (p. 433). Workshops are a natural fit for an English classroom because they offer authentic and active opportunities for students to develop skills in reading and writing (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 360). Workshops typically begin with an engaging introduction and then a mini-lesson to teach particular skills (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 392). Students then work as individuals and in pairings or small groups on an end product, typically a piece of writing or a project that demonstrates reading comprehension.

In addition to workshops, I will use the following instructional strategies:

Literature Circles can be done within a reading workshop and are a great way to allow students of varying ability levels to work together (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 417). In this strategy, students meet in small groups of 3 or 4 and take turns reading assigned literature aloud and discussing different elements of the literature. Teachers can provide prompts of certain passages that students might want to discuss, or they can allow the students to take the lead. As students take turns interpreting and discussing portions of the text, they learn about each other's perspectives and opinions. Brandvik and McKnight (2011) note that literature circles can be created according to interests, so that students who might not normally interact with each other will find they have interests in common (p. 177).

Learning Logs, or Reading Journals, can be a helpful strategy for teachers to track student progress and a helpful study tool for students. With this strategy, students take notes while they are reading, observing unfamiliar vocabulary, main ideas, interesting symbolism, and

more. According to Brandvik and McKnight (2011), “Writing during reading encourages students to consider the kinds of questions that take readers further in understanding than they might go on their own. It helps them gather information, reflect on it, and make connections between what they are learning and their own lives” (p. 183). With this strategy, teachers typically model a few different Reading Journals for students so that they can pick a format that will work best for them. By checking in on students once a week or so, teachers can utilize Reading Journals to see what student’s strengths and needs are and to adjust instruction accordingly.

Jigsaw is another collaborative learning strategy that allows each student to act as expert and teach his or her peers. With Jigsaw, students are placed into heterogeneous groupings and each group is assigned different portions of course material, such as a book chapter or a character in a novel. Each group discusses their content and decides on the key points. The groups can either present the information to the entire class or can assemble into new groups so that each “expert” teaches their content to the other new group members. Jigsaw is an effective inclusive teaching strategy because it depends upon cooperation and it allows each student to act as an expert on his or her particular material.

Open-Ended Group Projects can be used to allow students with various abilities and skills to work together on a project. For English, the possibilities for this strategy are endless as reading, writing, viewing, listening and speaking are all skills that can be incorporated. Additionally, students with different intelligences and strengths can contribute as their skills allow. For example, students could produce a video of a play so that some students act, others paint scenery, others direct and organize the production, and other film and edit. Another example could be the creation of a news or creative writing publication in which students write

material according to their interests, some students edit the writing, others create artwork to accompany the writing, and others format the layout of the publication. With Open-Ended Group Projects, the success of the project depends on having students with different skill sets involved, so it teaches an important lesson on the need for diversity in classrooms and in the workplace.

To further address multiple intelligences and multimodal thinking, my English classroom will not only utilize books and traditional forms of literature, but also digital and computer technology; films; music; audio recordings of books and plays; visual art; drama; and dance. By recognizing that each student can bring something special to the subject of English, I hope to incorporate these inclusive strategies.

Lesson Plan 1 **Creating a Visual Narrative**

Subject: English/Creative Writing

Grade Level: 10

Content

- Creating a visual narrative through digital photography
- Writing a concept paper to explain the visual narrative
- Online publishing (WordPress website) of the visual narrative and concept paper

Benchmarks

METS

- 9-12.CI.3. Use a variety of media and formats to design, develop, publish, and present projects (e.g., newsletters, web sites, presentations, photo galleries)

HSCE

- CE 1.2.1 Write, speak, and use images and graphs to understand and discover complex ideas.
- CE 1.2.3 Write, speak and create artistic representations to express personal experience and perspective (e.g., personal narrative, poetry, imaginative writing, slam poetry, blogs, web pages).

Learning Resources and Materials

- Access to computer and projector
- Online slideshow “Narrative Image: The how and why of visual storytelling” by Daniela Molnar (<http://www.slideshare.net/DanielaMolnar/narrative-image-the-how-and-why-of-visual-storytelling>)
- Handout containing essential information from slideshow
- Access to computer lab or laptops
- Paper/pens/colored pencils
- Access to digital camera
- Access to Internet/WordPress

Development of Lesson

- Show and discuss with students the slideshow “Narrative Image: The how and why of visual storytelling.”
- Introduce assignment of creating a visual narrative and accompanying concept paper.

- Students brainstorm, plan, and create visual narrative photography.
- Students write concept paper to discuss purpose of story, message of story, and their approach to the project.
- Students publish completed narrative and paper on class WordPress site.
- Students read and view each other's published projects and leave thoughtful commentary in comment section.

Introduction

- Show students the online slideshow “Narrative Image: The how and why of visual storytelling” by Daniela Molnar (<http://www.slideshare.net/DanielaMolnar/narrative-image-the-how-and-why-of-visual-storytelling>).
- Discuss the following questions:
 - What is a visual narrative?
 - What makes a good visual story?
- Allow students in class time to search for other examples of visual narratives and discuss how these narratives are effective.

Methods/Procedures

Day 1

- After introduction activities, introduce assignment and expectations to students.
- Provide students with handout of information from slideshow that will be useful to them.
- Allow rest of class time for brainstorming.

Day 2

- Students finish brainstorming and plan their approach to the project. Paper and colored pencils are provided so that students can sketch out the photographs they plan to take.
- Mini-conference with students throughout class time for feedback and to ensure project is progressing well.

Days 3-5

- Allow students partial class time to discuss their projects and begin working on concept paper.
- Students are expected to have photography done by Day 5.

Day 6

- Allow in class time for students to work on concept paper and discuss any issues or questions.

Day 8

- Projects are to be published online
- Allow partial class time for students to view each others' projects and leave commentary.

Accommodations/Adaptations

Students who have a physical and sensory impairment may:

- Work with another student to complete the physical aspects of the photography portion of the assignment
- Produce an audio recording of their narrative instead of publishing online

Students who have a visual impairment or low vision may:

- Create a tactile work of art, such as a clay sculpture or collage, instead of photography
- Use screen magnification software on the class computer to compose their narrative and read other students' narratives

Assessment/Evaluation

Students will be graded on a scale that provides a possible 3 points for satisfactory completion of the following:

- ideas and content
- creativity
- spelling, grammar punctuation
- participation (commentary on others' projects)

Closure

- On Day 9, once students have had a chance to view and comment on each others' projects, discuss the lesson.
- Have students consider:
 - Was this assignment more difficult than a traditional writing assignment?
 - Were you able to express anything visually that you might find hard to express verbally or in writing?
 - How well did the technology (digital cameras) help you achieve your goal?

Lesson Plan 2
***The Great Gatsby* Character Analysis**

Subject: English

Grade Level: 10

Content

- Analysis of character and voice in *The Great Gatsby*
- The use of Twitter/social media as an educational tool (Inspired by the following website: www.teachthought.com/social-media/60-ways-to-use-twitter-in-the-classroom-by-category/)
- Writing narratives

Benchmarks

METS

- 9-12.CC.4 Plan and implement a collaborative project using telecommunications tools
- 9-12.CI.3 Use a variety of media and formats to design, develop, publish, and present projects

Common Core

- MI.CC.W.9-10.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured sequences.
- MI.CC.RL.9-10.3 Analyze how complex characters develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

Learning Resources and Materials

- Computer lab or classroom laptops
- Computer with projector
- Copies of *The Great Gatsby*
- Article on the Royal Shakespeare Company's *Romeo and Juliet* Twitter project 9 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2010/apr/12/shakespeare-twitter-such-tweet-sorrow>)
- Access to [Twitter.com](http://twitter.com)

Development of Lesson

- Upon completion of *The Great Gatsby*, students discuss and describe voice in the novel.
- Working in groups, students discuss and describe attributes of main characters in the novel.

- Students create Twitter accounts for characters and spend three days tweeting with their group as the characters.
- Each group reports back to class on how the project worked.

Introduction

- Distribute handout on the Royal Shakespeare Company's Romeo and Juliet Twitter project. Have students read aloud and show corresponding video.
- Brief discussion on the article and video:
 - How effective are the tweets in portraying plot?
 - How effective are the tweets in portraying character?
 - What decisions did the actors make in portraying these characters?
 - How is the language of the tweets different than original Shakespeare?
- Brief discussion on social media:
 - How many students use Twitter? Facebook? Other social media?
 - How is language used in these venues different from academic language?

Methods/Procedures

Day 1

- As a whole class, discuss voice in *The Great Gatsby* and type responses and key points for viewing on the projector
 - How would you describe F. Scott Fitzgerald's writing style?
 - How would you describe the voice of Nick Carraway?
 - What about the other characters?
- Divide students into groups of five. Ask students to discuss and describe the attributes and voice of each of the following characters: Jay Gatsby, Nick Carraway, Daisy Buchanan, Tom Buchanan, and Jordan Baker.

Day 2

- Explain assignment to students: each person in the group will select a character and "tweet" as that character for three days, interacting with the characters portrayed by the other members of their groups. Each group will use a specific hashtag so that the entire Twitter conversation can be easily chronicled. Each group will be given a chapter or selection of chapters as a timeline for their character tweets.
- Allow the rest of class time for students to set up their Twitter profiles, brainstorm ideas for tweets, and begin tweeting.

Days 3 and 4

- Allow 15 minutes of class time per day for students to "tweet."

- Students will be expected to tweet outside of class as well.

Day 5

- Each group will present their project to the class, providing a summary of how the project took shape.

Accommodations/Adaptations

Students who have a hearing impairment may:

- Utilize additional supplemental reading materials to reinforce the ideas discussed in class
- Use real-time speech to text translation software during group discussion

Students who have a cognitive impairment may:

- Complete fewer tweets for full credit
- Utilize a reading guide for comprehension of *The Great Gatsby*

Assessment/Evaluation

- Students will be graded individually and as a group:
 - Groups will be graded on a scale of 1-5 for the Twitter project based on:
 - -number of tweets (at least 10 per character)
 - -quality of tweets
 - -quality of interaction
 - -creativity
 - -demonstration of knowledge of characters and plot
- One point is awarded for each element that is satisfied
- Individual students will receive either a satisfactory or unsatisfactory grade for their reflection responses. A satisfactory grade requires all answers be completed fully and thoughtfully.

Closure

Students respond to reflection questions that address the project:

- What realizations and observations about the social world of *The Great Gatsby* did you have while transposing it to a social networking environment?
- What did you learn about F. Scott Fitzgerald's writing style through imitation? Did you find it difficult? What was challenging?
- What writing skills do you feel like you employed in composing your tweets?
- What technical skills do you feel like you employed in composing your tweets?
- What did you find challenging or frustrating about the project?
- What did you enjoy about the project?

Lesson Plan 3
A Biography Study: Using Role Play to Explore Authors' Lives

Subject: English

Grade Level: 10

Content

- Learn about important American authors by researching their lives and sharing research with peers
- Develop research and inquiry skills by researching an author's life, examining the impact of culture on the author's life, and evaluating biographical material for bias, embellishments, or deletions
- Improve their communication skills by presenting an author to the class, listening to other students present their authors, and working collaboratively in groups to plan panel discussions
- Enhance their use of technology by using the Internet to research an author, post a written report, and prepare supplemental visuals to complement their panel presentations
- Improve their critical reading skills by evaluating websites and resource materials for accuracy and selecting information to include in their presentations
- Improve their writing skills by researching an American author, writing a brief report, and peer editing and revising their work

Benchmarks

Common Core

W.9-10.2. Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

W.9-10.2(a) Introduce a topic; organize complex ideas, concepts, and information to make important connections and distinctions; include formatting (e.g., headings), graphics (e.g., figures, tables), and multimedia when useful to aiding comprehension.

Learning Resources and Materials

- A collection of author biographies
- Computer with Internet connection

Introduction

Have the class brainstorm a list of American authors from your prior readings, along with any other American authors they find of interest.

Methods/Procedures

Before Reading

- Ask each student to select one author to research. Be sure that there are no duplications within a class. As students make their selections, have them sign-up on your master list.
- Have students visit the school library or media center to find and select biographies on their authors, or provide a list of preapproved biographies from which students can choose.
- Direct students to begin a K-W-L-S Chart, filling out what they know about the author and what they want to know. [While reading the biographies and researching their authors, they will continue filling out this chart with what they learned and what they still want to know.]
- Hand out and discuss the American Authors: Biography Assignment Sheet, previewing the project and supplying dates for the author mixer and panel presentations.

During Reading

- Instruct each student to keep a log while reading the biography to include important details about the author's life, interesting incidents, and at least five favorite quotes. [Logs should be collected and reviewed three times during the time allotted for reading the biographies.]
- Remind students to continue updating their K-W-L-S Charts with information they learned and still want to know while reading.
- Direct students to create timelines of the authors' lives. Distribute and review the Timeline Rubric to make sure that students understand your expectations for this part of the project. They should begin by taking notes on key events, and then use the interactive Timeline Tool to arrange the information on a graphic organizer. The finished timeline should be printed and brought in on the day of the author mixer.
- Each student will need to create a visual display for his or her author. While reading, they can begin working on this part of the project by reviewing the Biography Project Suggestions and beginning to compile their materials. The visual display will need to be completed and used as part of the panel presentation.

- Students should begin thinking about how they will portray their authors with costumes or props during the author mixer and panel presentation.
- Students should begin supplemental research on their authors using the Internet. Depending on the students' technology level, this research may be done at home or in the media center or computer lab with guided assistance.
- Student will write biopoems about their authors (see the How to Write a Biopoem sheet) and complete the Biography Project Discussion Questions for use later in the lesson when meeting with their groups about the panel presentation.

After Reading

- When the biography readings, timelines, and logs are complete, remind students of the author mixer.
- Instruct students to come to class dressed as their authors in costume or by having an appropriate prop to suggest who they are. This prop/attire should be unique to each individual author.
- In addition, direct students to be prepared to share information about their authors with their classmates. Students may each prepare one 3" x 5" note card to prompt details and quotes, but information should not be read.
- Have the class meet in a room with plenty of space for students to walk around and mingle. Remind students to stay "in character" throughout the session. As they greet each other, they should introduce themselves as the authors, and then either quote a few significant passages or give brief information about their authors. [Note: Birth and death dates or other "dry" data should not be used during the author mixer.]
- Allow students to mingle in this way for a few minutes and then call "freeze," at which time students should pair up with another author and discuss one or more of the following questions:
 - Explain how your birthplace and date (i.e., time period and culture) influenced your life and writing.
 - What are your most significant personality traits?
 - What is your most famous work? Why? Did you consider it your best?
 - Who was your most important influence as a writer?
 - What event in your life was the most traumatic?
 - What awards were you given? How did that affect your life and writing?
 - [These questions have been prepared in advance, but you may also have students brainstorm a list of questions to use during the author mixer instead.]
- After each author has shared for 1 to 2 minutes, students can begin to mingle again until they are told to "freeze." Each time the class "freezes," students must find a different author partner.

- Allow a full session for this activity, or as long as it takes for students to "meet and greet" all of the other authors.

Panel Presentation

- After the author mixer, instruct students to gather in groups of four to five students each (depending on class size), with other authors that they would like to learn more about or that their authors would find intriguing or controversial.
- Have students in each group read aloud their biopoems and use the previously completed biography project discussion questions and timelines to share additional information about their authors. [Collect and display the biopoems and timelines on an "author wall."]
- Distribute the Author Panel Presentation Rubric and review the expectations for this part of the project. Ask students if they have any questions before beginning work in their groups.
- Students should work together in their groups to prepare scripts to use during their panel presentations (see the Guidelines for Preparing a Script for the Panel Discussion). Scripts will be collected after the presentation.
- Assist groups in developing questions or topics that their authors can respond to during the panel presentation. Groups may elect to focus their discussion on a single issue such as "freedom and slavery" or the "American dream," revealing each author's attitude toward that topic.
- Have each group designate one author as the host for the "show," with the other authors appearing as guests.
- On the day of the presentation, students should bring their costumes or props to again portray their authors. Set up desks at the front of the room for the presenting authors to sit, and ask the "audience" to take notes on each author as the presentations are given. For further involvement, you may have students in the "audience" use a graphic organizer to compare and show relationships between authors and ideas. In addition, have students display their visuals on the "author wall" or set up an area for students to arrange their projects so that others can see them.

Accommodations/Adaptations

Students who have a language impairment may:

- Opt to create a video instead of an oral presentation
- Be provided with visual aids during all periods of class and group discussion to ensure comprehension of content

Students who have a learning disability may:

- Be provided with reading material at a lower comprehension level that covers the same content
- May choose to create a visual presentation instead of the written paper

Assessment/Evaluation

- Use the Timeline Rubric, Essay Rubric, and Author Panel Presentation Rubric to assess the student's work during the lesson. Several rubrics are available at Bridging the Gap: Group Work Rubrics and Checklists for assessing group work. Rubistar can also be used to find or create rubrics for this lesson.
- Periodically evaluate the reading logs, K-W-L-S charts, and notes to ensure that students are completing the project as expected.
- Teacher observation should also be a part of the assessment for this lesson. Watch to see that groups are working equitably on their panel presentations and are not wasting time. You will also want to observe students during the author mixer to gauge their interactions with one another and knowledge of the authors they have been researching.
- Self- and peer-editing should be used for the written essay.

Closure

- Have each student write a brief biographical sketch about his or her author. The essays on the U.S. Literary Map Project website can serve as models for students' work. Allow students to explore the site, but also provide them with guidelines for their assignment (i.e., the Essay Rubric), since the online samples vary in length and content. You might ask students to write their essays as if they were going to submit them to the site.
- While writing of the essay can be done for homework, set aside part of one class session for peer editing. Students should use the Peer-Editing Sheet and the Essay Rubric to guide their evaluations. A final copy of each essay should be submitted both electronically and as a hard copy. After you review the essays and have students make any further revisions, as needed, upload them to the website per the instructions provided.

Support and Collaboration

An inclusive classroom depends upon support and collaboration for success. Good relationships between general education teachers and support staff — such as special education teachers, Title I and bilingual teachers, counselors, social workers, and psychologists — are essential (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 160). In my future classroom I will collaborate with support staff to ensure that our students' needs are being met and that all students are able to succeed and feel welcome in the classroom. Support staff should not only “push in” but should be involved in the educational planning process. I think that coteaching is a strategy I would like try in my classroom so that both the support staff and I can utilize our particular strengths to support the success of all of our students. I hope to promote open communication with support staff and act out a philosophy that students' needs come first. I plan to work with support staff to find ways that I can better teach all students and hope that they can teach me some strategies for doing so. As mentioned previously, organizing my classroom so that students are grouped heterogeneously will also support inclusion in my classroom.

In addition to creating good relationships with support staff within my own classroom, I believe it is important to build good relationships with all teachers and staff, in order to further promote inclusivity. Because high school students move around to so many different classes in a day, it is important for teachers and support staff to share their own classroom and student experiences with each other so that they can better address a student's needs and strengths. For example, if a student writes better essays when he is given multiple small deadlines for parts of an essay instead of one deadline for an entire essay, his English teacher should communicate this to the student's other teachers so that they can better understand why he might be struggling to complete assignments on time. Teachers and support staff should work as a team to support all

students in all areas, not just the students in a particular class during a particular semester. If all teachers and support staff are able to communicate about students' needs and abilities, a more cohesive and inclusive learning environment can be achieved.

Further, I believe that schools shouldn't just support students academically, but that teachers and support staff (such as counselors and psychologists) should also work together to support students emotionally. Because behavioral challenges and students' emotional lives play a role in a student's success in the classroom, I feel it is important for teachers to be aware of any challenges or issues that students are facing. I would like my students to feel that I care about them as people, not just as students, and I think that open and frequent communication with counselors will allow me to be sensitive to my students' lives outside of my classroom. Additionally, fostering good relationships with counselors and school psychologists is important for the instances when a student may come to a teacher for help. Counselors and psychologists are the experts in this area and I feel that much can be learned from them on how to handle these instances.

I believe this academic and emotional support can be best achieved through collaborative consultation. According to Peterson and Hittie (2010), collaborative consultation is an effort by teachers and support staff to develop strategies to provide students with ongoing assistance in general education classrooms (p. 119). I would like to develop this approach in my own classroom as it promotes inclusivity of all students and requires teachers and support staff to collaborate proactively to determine a student's needs, rather than merely reacting to problems that arise when a student's needs aren't being met.

Strategies for Change

In order for a school to be inclusive, all teachers and staff must be active in working towards inclusivity. I plan to encourage inclusive education in my school in two main ways. The first is through the promotion of a Response to Intervention (RTI) program. Fisher and Frey's (2011) case study on implementing an RTI in a high school opened my eyes to the benefits that an RTI possesses. Within two years, the school documented in the case study saw radical transformations in student academic progress and student and teacher motivation. By focusing on quality core education and using course competencies to monitor progress, the teachers were able to design needed supplemental interventions for students on an almost daily basis. Special education referrals reduced dramatically as an effect of this responsive instruction. Aside from the academic gains that were evident in this case study, the attitudes and motivation levels of the students were quite impressive as they were able to visually monitor their progress. The teachers, too, were motivated to continue implementing the RTI program as they saw their students making progress. I would encourage my fellow teachers and administration to consider RTI for our school. Aided by other case studies that show tremendous progress in high schools that have used RTI, I believe I could make a convincing argument for RTI implementation (Fisher & Frey, 2011).

The second way that I plan to encourage inclusive education in my school is by promoting a student-centered positive behavioral support model, as previously discussed. This behavioral model directly addresses students' needs and helps build community, rather than isolating students. While RTI implementation can have an incredible impact on students' academic progress, their emotional well being is just as important. I will begin to promote this approach in my own classroom and hope that other teachers and administrators will observe the

benefits of a behavioral approach that is proactive and needs based (Peterson & Hittie, 2010, p. 317).

These approaches both depend upon good relationships among teachers and staff as well as an understanding that the school is a community whose many parts have a significant impact on each other and are dependent upon each other. In order for these approaches to work, all teachers and administrators must understand the importance of inclusivity and value how it can transform a school. I plan to work to build a strong community within my school — through both daily interactions and more organized efforts such as retreats — so that everyone will feel equally responsible for promoting inclusive education.

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