

Design for Diverse Learners: Positioning Yourself

How can we design learning opportunities/systems that work well for people different than ourselves?

We asked this question to each of the Community Engagement Fellows cohorts in Fall 2017, Below is the advice they shared related to positioning yourself within the learning system.

Positioning yourself. *Be thoughtful about how you structure and play your role(s) in the learning system.*

- Ensure a diversity of learning styles exists among those designing the system.
- Delegate tasks to a wide array of different types of people—empower them to make decisions and build ownership.
- Be vulnerable—let people know what you care about, what you’re struggling with—you have to model it in order for others to be willing to do it. “Vulnerability always comes before trust,” says Brené Brown.
- Position yourself as coach rather than “teacher.”
- Help students take ownership of their own learning.
- Know when you’re the expert, and when you’re not.
- Participate alongside those who you’re trying to help learn, and notice your own learning.
- Prioritize cultural competency/awareness/humility.
- Be honest about your goals and capacities.
- Check your ego.
- Be willing to be uncomfortable.
- Take a deep breath.
- Be aware of your own biases and hot buttons.
- You have changed as a learner through your life; the same is true for others.
- Lower the stakes.

- Share your passion(s).
- Treat people as individuals, not as a group with exactly the same interests.
- Create an optimal learning environment within the system you're working within.
- Be open to students making connections with people and ideas beyond your own experience.
- Be aware of people who *feel* they are different and how they approach the world.
- Don't jump to conclusions or make assumptions; your stereotype may be wrong, and/or you might miss the outliers.
- Be aware that you may become a mentor or be mentored by someone in an informal but very influential way.
- Clearly understand your own learning styles, strengths and weaknesses. Practice teaching in ways that stretch and challenge you.
- Get over yourself :)