

2019

Activity (for Instructors): Toward a Critical-Inclusive Assessment Practice

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Recommended Citation

McCartin, Lyda and Dineen, Rachel, "Activity (for Instructors): Toward a Critical-Inclusive Assessment Practice" (2019). *Information Literacy*. 20.

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Toward a Critical-Inclusive Assessment Practice

Session Packet

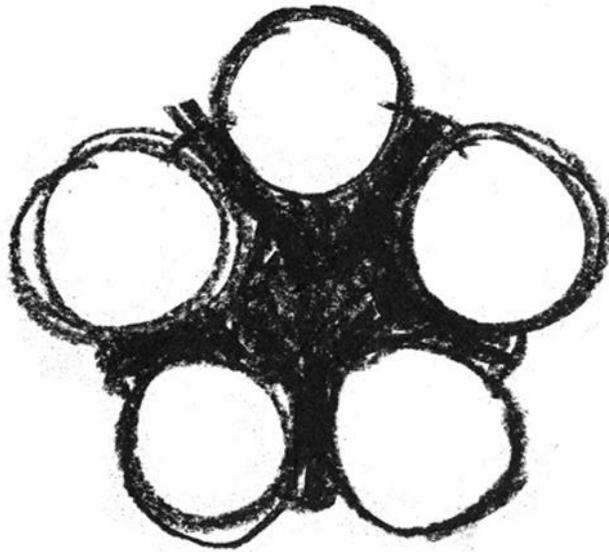
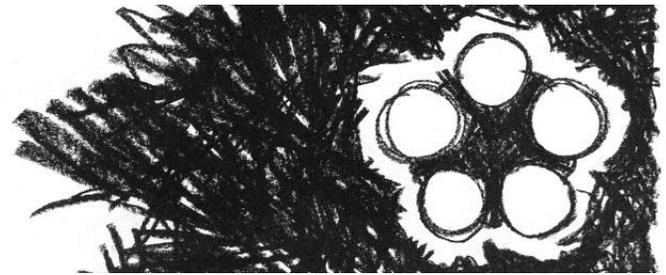


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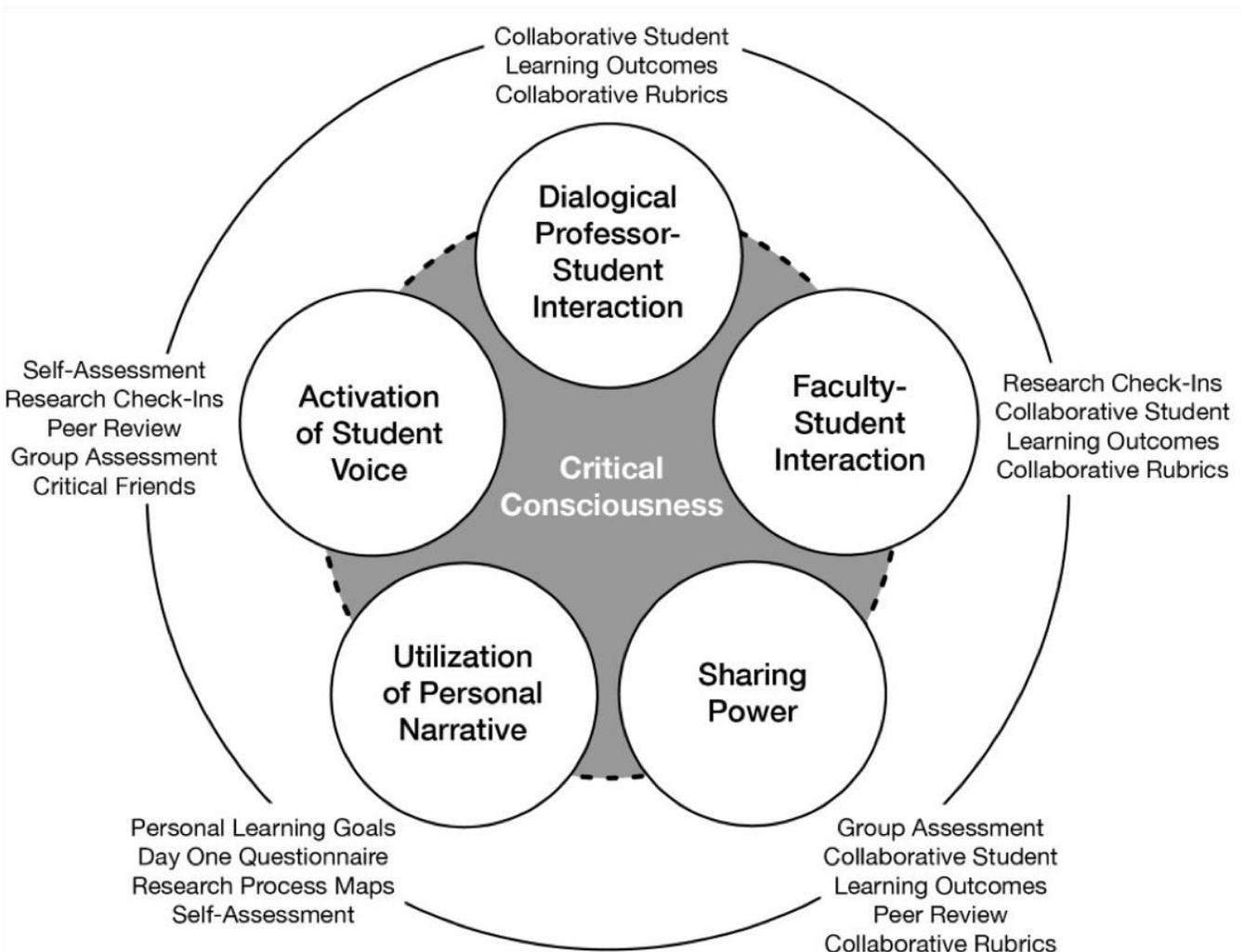
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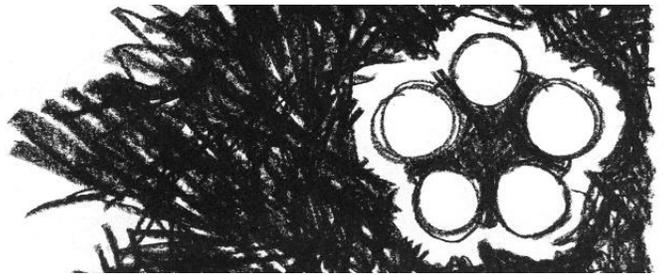
Critical-Inclusive Pedagogical Framework



Overview

Dr. Saran Stewart developed the Critical-Inclusive Pedagogical Framework (CIPF)¹ based on the tenets of inclusive pedagogy outlined by Dr. Frank Tuitt. Stewart designed the CIPF in order to “develop a conceptual and theoretical base in which to engage students in higher education as co-constructors in the teaching-learning process.”² We’ve adapted her original representation of the CIPF to emphasize the holistic nature of the five tenets:





Dialogical Professor-Student Interaction

Like Paulo Freire we hope to deconstruct the traditional student/teacher relationship that is developed with the banking model of education.³ Dialogical interaction is more than a conversation that two people have walking down the street.⁴ It is also distinctive from dialogue that reinforces a one-way discussion between two unequals. Dialogic interaction is about relationships between equals that promotes critique with the aim of creating collaborative learning environments.⁵ The goal is to center student voice in both learning and assessment and to create a classroom environment where students and teachers are partners in learning and teaching.⁶ Fostering partnerships with students and ensuring that we engage in dialogue with our students about the classroom and the curriculum “gives students an opportunity to engage in democratic practices as well as democratic ways of being.”⁷ Dialogical interaction is essential to creating a classroom where everyone can succeed; meaningful dialogue is what allows us to confront barriers and start to form a collaborative community in the classroom.⁸ For Frank Tuitt, “the dialogical process seeks to create respectful, challenging, and collaborative learning environments and to ensure that there is mutual professor-student participation.”⁹

Faculty-Student Interaction

In the traditional college classroom, there is little teacher-student interaction because the class revolves around the activity and control of the professor.¹⁰ Inversely, critical and inclusive pedagogues see students as partners in the learning process, and work to share authority and power with students as opposed to demonstrating authority over students.¹¹ Building partnerships with students is a shift in our thinking from preparing students to be democratic citizens to realizing that they already are citizens, and that we need to engage with them as citizens.¹² Faculty-student interaction “promotes positive relationships between student and faculty.”¹³

Sharing Power

Sharing power in the classroom does not come naturally. University structures impose a model of authority, and students who have been living in the system are not always prepared for the responsibility of shared power in the classroom.¹⁴ Students may actively refuse to participate in this type of classroom and may see the professor as less effective, which causes some professors to stop trying.¹⁵ Partnerships require respect, reciprocity, and shared responsibility, all of which goes both ways.¹⁶ This notion is also seen in the work of bell hooks, who believes that sharing power is about students recognizing their responsibility for their own learning and making the classroom a democratic space where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute.¹⁷ We’ve come to see that we must acknowledge our roles as experts and we must acknowledge the power we have as faculty. To do otherwise, or to pretend a false equivalency, is to come into the classroom dishonestly. Discussing this in her own work, Saran Stewart claims “as the lecturer, I am also the oppressor with the assumed sole power to construct knowledge in the class. I control the direction of my students’ learning and can either encourage or diminish inclusion.”¹⁸ Partnership, according to Alison Cook-Sather, Catherine Bovill, and Peter Felten, “does not require a false equivalency, but it does mean that the perspective and contributions made by partners are equally valued and respected.”¹⁹ We also must acknowledge the expertise of students, who are experts at being students, and whose experiences can expand our own understanding of teaching, learning, and assessment. To build effective partnerships with students we must “listen to students but also articulate our own expertise, perspectives, and commitments.”²⁰



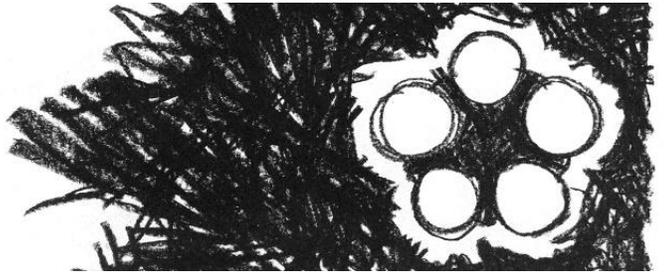
Utilization of Student Narrative

Student voice and student narrative are similar in that they both seek to centralize student experience. Saran Stewart describes student narrative as teachers knowing about the lives of students outside of the classroom and using that knowledge to enhance course content. Using student experience leads to increased student engagement and better relationships between students and teachers.²¹ Narrative is different from voice in that it is about personal reflection that leads to making connections between personal experience and new information gained in the classroom. The crux of this tenet is that “one’s own experience is central to understanding and developing knowledge.”²² Eamon Tewell illustrates utilization of student narrative in his description of a class activity on examining bias in subject headings:²³

One class was researching the communities in Brooklyn and New York City that they've grown up in or currently live in, and how these communities have changed (or not) in terms of demographics. One of the resources they were using was NY Times Historical Newspapers, and so I did a search for a largely African-American neighborhood and noted the different subject headings that were ascribed to an article about the neighborhood, all negative and judgmental of the community's condition. I compared this search to one for an affluent White neighborhood and pointed out how differently the subject headings portrayed this area, and asked what that signals to people researching different areas of the city. Later while students were searching for information on their communities, one student pointed out how her neighborhood was depicted in a Times article as dirty, deteriorating, and crime-ridden. She grew up in and loved her neighborhood, and challenged this representation--she decided she was changing her paper topic from how the neighborhood had changed over the years into one about all of the good things in her community, like her church, social support services, community events, and the people that tie her community together. This was an important moment because the student recognized the racial bias inherent in a prominent, respected publication and chose to refute that representation by providing counter-evidence.

Activation of Student Voice

A teacher activates student voice by centering on discussions important to students. Peter McLaren defines voice as “the cultural grammar and background knowledge that individuals use to interpret and articulate experience.”²⁴ Jane Seale notes that voice entails “listening to and valuing the views that students express regarding their learning experiences; communicating student views to people who are in a position to influence change; and treating students as equal partners in the evaluation of teaching and learning, thus empowering them to take a more active role in shaping or changing their education.”²⁵ Voice is the recognition that each student brings unique experiences and can contribute valuable perspectives on learning. Centering students’ voice acknowledges “student point-of-view and experience, a strategy that stands in contrast to responding only to teacher or bureaucratically-driven conceptions of learning.”²⁶ Acknowledging that students have a voice, and encouraging them to use it, is essential to critical and inclusive pedagogies.²⁷ The key is to realize that it is not enough for students simply to talk. We must listen. Active listening is essential to dialogue and “being listened to” tells students that their voices matter and helps to motivate participation.²⁸







¹ Dr. Stewart earned her Ph.D. from the University of Denver. She is currently lecturer of Comparative Higher Education in the School of Education at the University of the West Indies.

² Saran Stewart, "Advancing a Critical and Inclusive Praxis: Pedagogical Curriculum Innovations for Social Change in the Caribbean," in *Race, Equity and the Learning Environment: The Global Relevance of Critical and Inclusive Pedagogies in Higher Education*, eds. Frank Tuitt, Chayla Haynes, and Saran Stewart (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2016), 9-22.

³ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, New rev 20th-Anniversary ed. (New York: Continuum, 1993), 53.

⁴ Paulo Freire and Donald P. Macedo, "A Dialogue: Culture, Language, and Race," in *Breaking Free: The Transformative Power of Critical Pedagogy*, eds. Pepi Leistyna, Arlie Woodrum, and Stephen A. Sherblom (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Review, 1996), 199-228.

⁵ Catherine O'Connor and Sarah Michaels, "When is Dialogue 'Dialogic'?" *Human Development* 50 (2007): 275-285; Saran Stewart, "Everything in Di Dark Muss Come to Light: A Postcolonial Investigation of the Practice of Extra Lessons at the Secondary Level in Jamaica's Education System." Ph.D. Diss., University of Denver, 2013.

⁶ Alison Cook-Sather, Catherine Bovill, and Peter Felten, *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching* (San Francisco: Josey-Bass, 2014).

⁷ Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching*, 128.

⁸ bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 130.

⁹ Tuitt, "Afterword: Realizing a More Inclusive Pedagogy," 248.

¹⁰ Tuitt, Haynes, and Stewart, *Race, Equity and the Learning Environment*.

¹¹ Nancy Schniedewind, "Teaching Feminist Process," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 15, no. 3/4 (1987): 15-31.

¹² Alison Hicks and Caroline Sinkinson, "Reflections on the Retention Narrative: Extending Critical Pedagogy Beyond the Classroom," in *Critical Library Pedagogy Handbook*, Volume 1, eds. Nicole Pagowsky and Kelly McElroy (Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2016), 171-183.

¹³ Stewart, "Advancing a Critical and Inclusive Praxis," 14.

¹⁴ Stewart, "Advancing a Critical and Inclusive Praxis," 15.

¹⁵ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 187-188.

¹⁶ Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching*, 3.

¹⁷ hooks, *Teaching to Transgress*, 187-188.

¹⁸ Stewart, "Advancing a Critical and Inclusive Praxis," 12.

¹⁹ Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching*, 7.

²⁰ Cook-Sather, Bovill, and Felten, *Engaging Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching*, 9.

²¹ Stewart, "Everything in Di Dark Muss Come to Light," 245.

²² Mary Ann Danowitz and Frank Tuitt, "Enacting Inclusivity Through Engaged Pedagogy: A Higher Education Perspective," *Equity & Excellence in Education* 44, no. 1 (2011): 49.

²³ Eamon Tewell, email correspondence to author, June 21, 2016. This is also discussed by Tewell in a recent LOEX conference presentation. See Eamon Tewell, "The Problem with Grit: Dismantling Deficit Models in Information Literacy Instruction," (LOEX, Houston, TX, May 5, 2018).

²⁴ Peter McLaren, *Life in Schools*, 6th ed. (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2015), 180.

²⁵ Jane Seale, "Doing Student Voice Work in Higher Education: An Exploration of the Value of Participatory Methods," *British Educational Research Journal* 36, no. 6 (December 2010): 995-1015.

²⁶ Julie McLeod, "Student Voice and the Politics of Listening in Higher Education," *Critical Studies in Education* 52, no. 2 (2011): 179-189.

²⁷ Frank Tuitt, "Afterword: Realizing a More Inclusive Pedagogy," in *Race and Higher Education: Rethinking Pedagogy in Diverse College Classrooms*, eds. Annie Howell and Frank Tuitt (Cambridge MA: Harvard Education Publishing Group, 2003), 243-268.

²⁸ Ira Shor, *When Students Have Power: Negotiating Authority in Critical Pedagogy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 49.