EDISJ in the Classroom

Sam Matychuk – Senior Manager, Student
Learning Supports & Disability Services

(604) 528-5884|studentresources@jibc.ca

WHAT?

EDISJ: EDISJ, or Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice, is a set of values that work to break down stigma, discrimination, prejudice, and barriers that individuals and groups experience throughout institutions (such as post-secondary educational institutions) and society.

Equity: "Equity is achieved through the identification and elimination of barriers such as policies and practices that have prevented full and complete participation for everyone" (Kisilevich, 2022, p. xiii). In contrast to equality, which focuses on equal treatment for all individuals regardless of their various identities, equity acknowledges the impact of power and privilege when addressing barriers and biases that limit individual and group opportunities (CICMH & CMHA, 2020).

Diversity: Diversity can be understood as "both the similarities and differences amongst individuals or groups in reference to race, ethnicity, and gender, age, national origin, religion, dis/ability, sexual orientation, pregnancy, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, parental status, job role, and/or physical appearance" (Kisilevich, 2022, p. xiii).

Inclusion: Inclusion is a conscious individual, group, and organizational effort to create a sense of meaningful belonging and acceptance in an environment or to a group for all individuals of different backgrounds. Meaningful inclusion means acknowledging additional barriers that members of systemically and historically disadvantaged groups may have, and ensuring that all individuals feel welcome and respected.

Social Justice: Social justice addresses issues of "human rights, access, participation, and equity" within organizations (Kisilevich, 2022, p. xiii). It is a recognition of and commitment to break down systemic distributions of power and privilege that marginalize certain individuals and groups within an institution or society.

WHY?

Committing to EDISJ in your classroom allows students to feel brave, welcome, and included. This positively impacts students' mental health and allows them the opportunity to be engaged learners that are able to express themselves and achieve high academic performance (Atkins, 2021, CICMH & CMHA, 2020). If students feel "unwelcome, judged, stereotyped, disrespected or invisible," they can often struggle to attend class, to participate in discussion, or to take accountability for their learning (Learning for Justice, 2018, p. 8). Research has shown that EDISJ contributes to students feeling that they belong in the classroom, and that students must feel welcome in order to learn (Learning for Justice, 2018).

An appreciation of the diverse experiences, perspectives, cultures, backgrounds, and identities that are present in your classroom allows for an improved learning experience for all students: "by fostering a space that prioritizes inclusion and acknowledges and respects diversity, instructors will provide a more engaging and enjoyable learning experience. They will help their students prepare for more successful and enriching careers in the years ahead. And they will help shape better civilians and communities" (McGraw Hill, 2021, par. 4).

HOW?

McGraw Hill Education (2021) outlines 5 steps to creating classrooms founded on EDISJ values:

"1. Design courses to appeal to a range of learning needs by including diverse perspectives, topics, and sources in the curriculum. Everyone has blind spots, so working with a colleague who has a different background and set of experiences can help.

2. Establish the classroom – both lectures and discussion spaces – as inclusive and respectful. Communicate early and often with students to clarify what constitutes respectful and disrespectful behaviours. And be sure to create barrier-free ways for students to say if they have been hurt or feel uncomfortable in the class.

3. Connect students with external communities. Promote student associations and bring in a diverse set of guest speakers from communities and businesses.

4. Support students from a holistic perspective – don't centre on academics alone. Rather, acknowledge and accommodate emotional, financial and cultural needs, too.

5. Use the zero-indifference approach when a student makes an insensitive comment. Rather than resorting to punishment, the approach turns the situation into an opportunity to educate the student on why their comment was inappropriate. However, the experiences of those who are targeted by the comment must be prioritized." (McGraw Hill, 2021, par. 9)

Further, an EDISJ-centered classroom considers the importance of language. Teachers should recognize that language often carries and perpetuates stereotypes, discrimination, and negative assumptions about individuals or groups (CICMH & CMHA, 2020). EDISJ is an intentional process, requiring teachers to reflect on how their choices and actions impact a student's ability to feel brave and respected, and thus feel comfortable in their learning environment and to create a more rewarding and engaging experience for everyone.

> *Zero indifference means "never letting disrespectful conduct go unaddressed," ensuring that behaviours that are not in line with EDISJ values are named and addressed as an opportunity for learning, growth, and restitution, while ensuring that the harmed individual's or group's safety is prioritized (Learning for Justice, 2018, p. 13).*

https://www.jibc.ca/policy/student-code-conduct

References:

Atkins, M. (2021). *Increasing Inclusivity and Social Justice in the Post-Secondary System Through Universal Design*. Adler University.

Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health & Canadian Mental Health Association. (2020). *Equity, Diversity & Inclusion: A Toolkit for Post-Secondary Campuses.*

Kisilevich, T. M. (2022). Building a Culture of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Social Justice at a Community College. *The Organizational Improvement Plan at Western University*, 266. Retrieved from https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/oip/266

Learning for Justice. (2018). Critical Practices for Anti-Bias Education. In *Tolerance.org*. Teaching Tolerance. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from https://www.learningforjustice.org/sites/default/files/2021-11/LFJ-2111-Critical-Practices-for-Anti-bias-Ed-November-2021-11172021.pdf

McGraw Hill. (2021, April 21). *How students benefit from diversity on-campus and online*. McGraw Hill Education. Retrieved December 21, 2022, from https://www.mheducation.ca/blog/how-students-benefit-from-diversity-on-campus-and-online