



# Fostering Respect for Diversity

## UDL CHECKPOINT 8.3: [Foster collaboration and community](#)

— Provide learners with guidance and flexible grouping to allow for optimal collaboration and help them establish a more effective and respectful learning community.

### What is it?

Collaboration is essential for academic and professional success in our contemporary society. However, not all learners feel comfortable when collaborating with their peers. Therefore, it is essential that instructors actively acknowledge and respect learners' diversity during collaboration and the creation of learning communities within the classroom.

### Why do it?

Fixed grouping (consistent grouping with the same members) can cause learners to become stuck performing the same repetitive task(s) during each groupwork/breakout session. This can negatively impact engagement, learning, and overall academic success. Choosing flexible grouping (different grouping for each task, based on specific learners' needs and abilities) can improve learners' engagement while showcasing a focus on and respect for inclusion and equity.

### How can I apply it?

Here are some ways that you can foster inclusivity and respect for diversity.

- **Create a safe, respectful, and accepting class environment.** Have learners introduce themselves at the beginning of the semester and maintain a positive atmosphere throughout the semester.
- **Create new groups for each task.** Flexible grouping helps learners diversify their knowledge and become more holistic in their understanding of class concepts.
- **Variety of options.** Students can work independently, with a partner, or in small groups (depending on the task).
- **Encourage peer interaction.** Peer cooperation can help learners better engage and understand course material and can include Think, Pair, Shares as well as peer-tutors.
- **Be comprehensive with group prompts.** Ensure that prompts for groupwork are clear with the task's goals as well as learners' roles and responsibilities.

### Summary

Classes are comprised of learners with diverse backgrounds, interests, and levels of knowledge and experience. When learners engage and collaborate in constructive and respectful ways with their peers (whether within groups or as a whole), they can feel more comfortable with their learning community, which can lead to better understanding and success within the course and in their academic journey.