

Promoting Neurodiverse Inclusive Teaching Practices, Creativity, Self-efficacy, and Academic Performance via Concept Maps and Portfolio - Innovative Teaching Strategy for Engagement, Agency & Comprehension

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The concept map journal and portfolio teaching technique promotes an unique format of synthesis that fosters an inclusive learning environment, engagement, agency and comprehension. This assessment supports and encourages students to process the course content in their preferred learning styles and allows for a variety of submission options. This assessment focuses on synthesis of weekly content in a creative reflection and submission format. Students are encouraged to find their unique academic voice, submit weekly concept maps and a final concept map portfolio and reflection. Students are encouraged to learn about their learning styles and find a technique that fosters their academic and personal growth.

This assessment has been implemented in various higher education courses since the Fall 2022 semester. Students have submitted a variety of formats including: poems, songs, collages, music reflections, student made songs, memes, student made podcasts, drawings, cooking/recipes, gardening, photography, brainstorming, radio host, article reflection, tv/cartoon reflection, arts/crafts and other forms of expression. The students have provided positive feedback regarding this assessment. There has also been a noticeable increase in student participation, critical thinking, reflection, comfort in belonging and improved academic performance.

Research has been shown to support the impetus for listening to autistic student voices and including them in the design of student-centered inclusive teaching practices as a vital framework to support their academic success. (Shepherd et al. 2024; Tan et al. 2024; Zahir et al. 2024; Friedman & Nash-Luckenbach 2024; Shea & Derry 2022). This assessment allows students to chose what format of content synthesis works best for their neurotype and therein aims to promote an inclusive learning environment.

Biography

Veronika Kolesnikov is a dedicated educator and scholar specializing in human development and child psychology. She serves as a lecturer in the College of Education at California State University, Sacramento, where she teaches courses in child and adolescent development . Additionally, she holds a teaching position at Sacramento City College, contributing to the Family and Consumer Science department

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