Creating A Community of Inclusion: Actions for Accessibility and Allyship

Megan Aanstoos, Ph.D.

Why am I here talking to you?

- I am one of the 30-45 million Americans older than 12 with a hearing loss
- I am passionate about providing equitable access for people like me who live with a disability in a world not set up for us
- I am the Chair of the AUTM EDI Committee, focused on bringing EDI education and outreach to the technology transfer profession
- I am an Ally for minority communities

The Basics

What is an Ally?

- Ally = An individual that has agreed to give help and support to another person; especially when they identify differently than the individual to whom they are providing support
- Find ways to build your Allyship into everything you do
- Share your personal stories and find ways to connect
- Create Welcoming environments, embracing "culture add" rather than "culture fit"

How can you be an effective Ally?

Every day actions speak louder than words

Don't wait to be asked

The best way to be an Ally is to educate yourself

- Address someone by their title or use their full name unless you know their pronoun

- Add your pronouns in your email signature

- Make sure your email signature block is selectable and not an image that can't be read by screen readers

- Mention that documents are attached

- Embrace color contrast

- Font size & link identification

- Logical reading structure

Emails

Webinars

- Provide descriptions of content and use colorblind awareness principles for documents and presentations

- Use captioning/live transcription; if you play a video, learn how to turn these on and use them

- Speak slowly and clearly

- Don't say things like "As you see on the slide"

- Use meaningful titles and content

- Avoid animations

- Treat everyone with the respect you want to receive

- Person first, not aids

- Be patient

- Be open to new things

- Flexibility is key

In Person

Step It Up

Be An Advocate

If you see someone is suffering, speak up

- Recognize individual identities
- Acknowledge privileges
- Promote equity -- eliminating "otherness" even while acknowledging difference
- Interrupt microaggressions

- We all have some type of bias - the important thing is to acknowledge them and actively work to overcome them

- Call out when you see bias in action

  - Microagressions

  - Macroaggressions

- Find ways to address the inequity

Learn about accessibility biases

Accessibility is easier if the burden is not on the person who needs the extra help

- If you have a student coming in who has identified as someone with special needs, research and learn about what you can do to help BEFORE they arrive
- Then work with them to put their specific accommodations in place
- Familiarize yourself with the Disability Resource Center on your campus
- Be open to flexibility, each person may approach the help they need differently

Accessibility in Classrooms

- Share your pronouns and invite students to do the same

- Consider individual needs: chairs, lab benches, sit/stand, lights/sounds, etc

- Always turn on captioning/live transcription for any virtual presentations

- Speak facing the classroom

- Provide descriptions of content and use colorblind awareness principles for documents and presentations
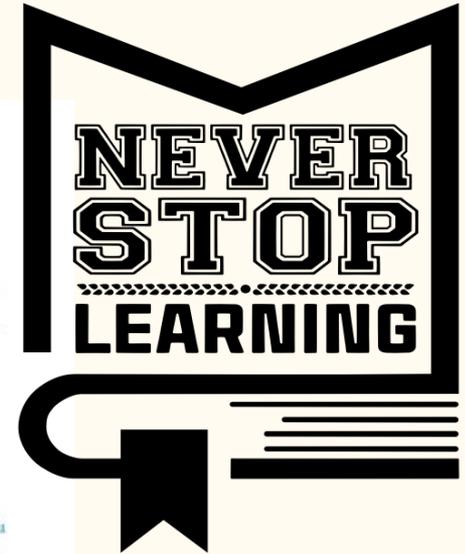
Active Allyship

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better."
 - Maya Angelou

Read stories, attend webinars, take training courses

Conclusion

Allyship isn't something you can check off a list. It is an active, on-going mindset that can't be perfected, but can be a life changing experience for someone.

The best thing you can do is try, based on what you have learned, and adapt as you learn more.

People are eager to share their story and help others to best engage with them, listen to someone and let them lead.

References & Resources

1. Cambridge Dictionary https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/ally
2. Email Accessibility Best Practices https://www.emailonacid.com/blog/article/email-development/email-accessibilty-in-2017/
3. Accessibility in PowerPoint: Presentations for people with colour blindness: https://www.brightcarbon.com/blog/optimising-presentations-for-people-with-colour-blindness/
4. Google Slides Accessibility: https://www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/Google-Slides-Accessibility.pdf
5. Simulate color blindness: http://www.color-blindness.com/coblis-color-blindness-simulator/
6. Simulate hearing loss: https://successforkidswithhearingloss.com/for-professionals/demonstrations-simulated-listening-with-hearing-loss-devices/ and https://www.hearinglikeme.com/hearing-loss-simulator/
7. How to Be an Ally in the Classroom: https://www.learningforjustice.org/professional-development/webinars/how-to-be-an-ally-in-the-classroom
8. Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: What's an ally?: https://library.mccnh.edu/DEI/allies
9. How the able-bodied can do better with disabled neighbors like me: https://wapo.st/3wF7Nrz
10. WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN ALLY?: https://www.freedomforuminstitute.org/2019/09/06/what-does-it-mean-to-be-an-ally/