

Students need to feel comfortable and safe in the classroom – that they belong. Many of the articles I read from the Diversity and Inclusion report talk about the increase in success that occurs in this type of environment. How can I promote that environment as the professor? How can I make it feel like we are part of a community and still acknowledge the presence and importance of the diversity of the group?

My first thought was to incorporate some historical context to the mathematics we are learning purposefully choosing mathematicians from diverse backgrounds.

<https://arbitrarilyclose.com/2016/08/21/the-mathematicians-project-mathematicians-are-not-just-white-dudes/>

My hope was that at least one student would relate to the person I chose and that would help them feel included – both in the class as well as the field of mathematics.

But I wanted more.

My plan is to create a video that explores my personal diversity to showcase what makes me different from everyone else in the class as well as what (hopefully surprising) similarities I may have with others in the class. I would show the video to the class towards the end of the first day. Afterward students would have an opportunity to ask me questions or comment about things they were able to connect with from my video. I would then assign them to create their own personal background story using video, PowerPoint, Prezi, etc. For those that are willing, I would share their presentation (anonymously if need be) with the class at the beginning of certain class days during the first part of the semester. I think this will make students aware that there are others in class that share facets of their backgrounds. It will help them to know that they are not alone on the journey. It also gets me involved in the community aspect. I hopefully become more approachable and establish the feeling of inclusion in the classroom.