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# Chester University Keynote 2026

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Some slides by Lucy Sors, Inclusion Lead YSJ ITE

# When Compassion Is Not Enough: Rethinking Inclusion as Pedagogy in Higher Education

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# Universities see themselves as inclusive

Most universities believe they are inclusive because they:

- comply with the Equality Act
- fund disability services
- Have an inclusion policy
- Offer EDI CPD
- Have a culture of ‘care’

# Compassion *feels* sufficient?

Familiar HE practices:

- Extensions on request
- Individual learning plans that sit outside curriculum design
- Reasonable adjustments/retrofitting adjustments *after* students struggle
- ‘we did what we can’

*Which students in your programmes succeed because they adapt to us—rather than because we adapt to them?*

Compassion without pedagogical change is not inclusion—it is containment.

# But exclusion persists

Rising disability disclosure
Persistent attainment gaps
Equality Law tends to be reactive

- responds to declared need
- centres reasonable adjustment

What SEND offers HE is not categorisation—but a disciplined way of noticing barriers before students fail.

Equality Act = reactive legal duty
SEND CoP = anticipatory pedagogical logic
HE largely operates on the former and ignores the latter

# SEND CoP 0-25 (2015)

- HEIs follow the 2010 Equality Act
- Schools follow this, but practice is governed by the SEND CoP (2015) which considers educational need arising from a variety of sources.
- For HEIs ***not*** to consider this is an oversight.

# Why HE keeps discovering the same problem

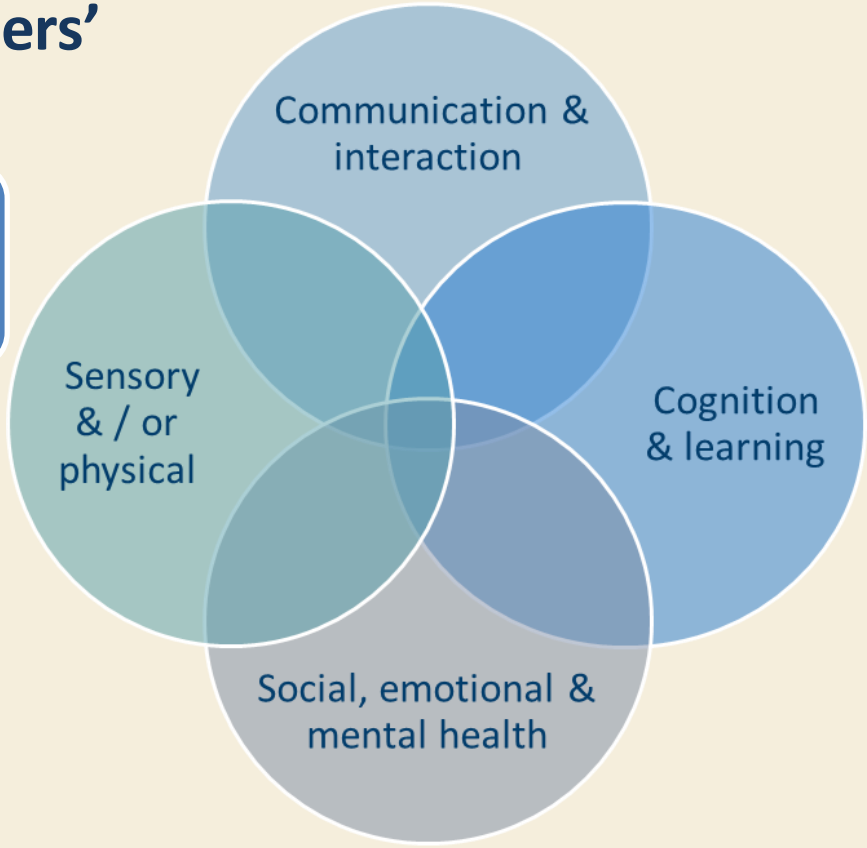
Inclusion through SEND lens: 40+ years of professional thinking about:

- barriers
- overlapping needs
- anticipatory practice
- high-expectation inclusion.

# Critical reflection on the '4 Broad Areas of Need' (SEND CoP 0-25, 2015) reconceptualised as **'barriers'**

## How can this focus help us to identify and remove barriers?

- 'Areas' overlap
- Focus on well-being
- Modes of support will depend on students
- High quality practice is anticipatory and based on understanding of specific barriers
- High quality, universal inclusive teaching to meet all students' needs is the foundation to practice
- Good practice for SEND is good practice for all




Lucy Sors

# The medical → social → critical shift

**Adaptive** = responsive in real time, not standardised or individualised after failure

**Critical** = attentive to power, norms, and disciplinary cultures

**Pedagogy** = curriculum design, not pastoral repair

# The medical model

**Core assumption**

The problem resides in the individual.

Disability, difficulty or difference is a deficit

Pedagogy is unchanged

Expertise is diagnostic and corrective

**Freirean parallel:**

the “banking model” of education, where:

knowledge is deposited,

learners are passive,

failure is individualised.

# The social model

**Core assumption**

The problem resides in the environment.

Barriers are designed into systems

Access is about removal or adjustment

Responsibility shifts from student to institution

**Freirean parallel:**

This resonates with Freire's insistence that:

- oppression is structural,
- exclusion is produced, not accidental,
- education is never neutral.

# Critical model

**Core assumption**

The problem resides in power, norms, and epistemology.

- Whose ways of thinking count as “rigorous”?
- Whose participation styles are rewarded?
- Which learners are expected to adapt — and which are designed for?

**Freirean parallel**

This is Freirean *alignment*

- Dialogue, not transmission
- Humanisation vs domestication
- Education as ethical and political practice
- Learners as knowers, not recipients

# A SEND lens offers a different logic

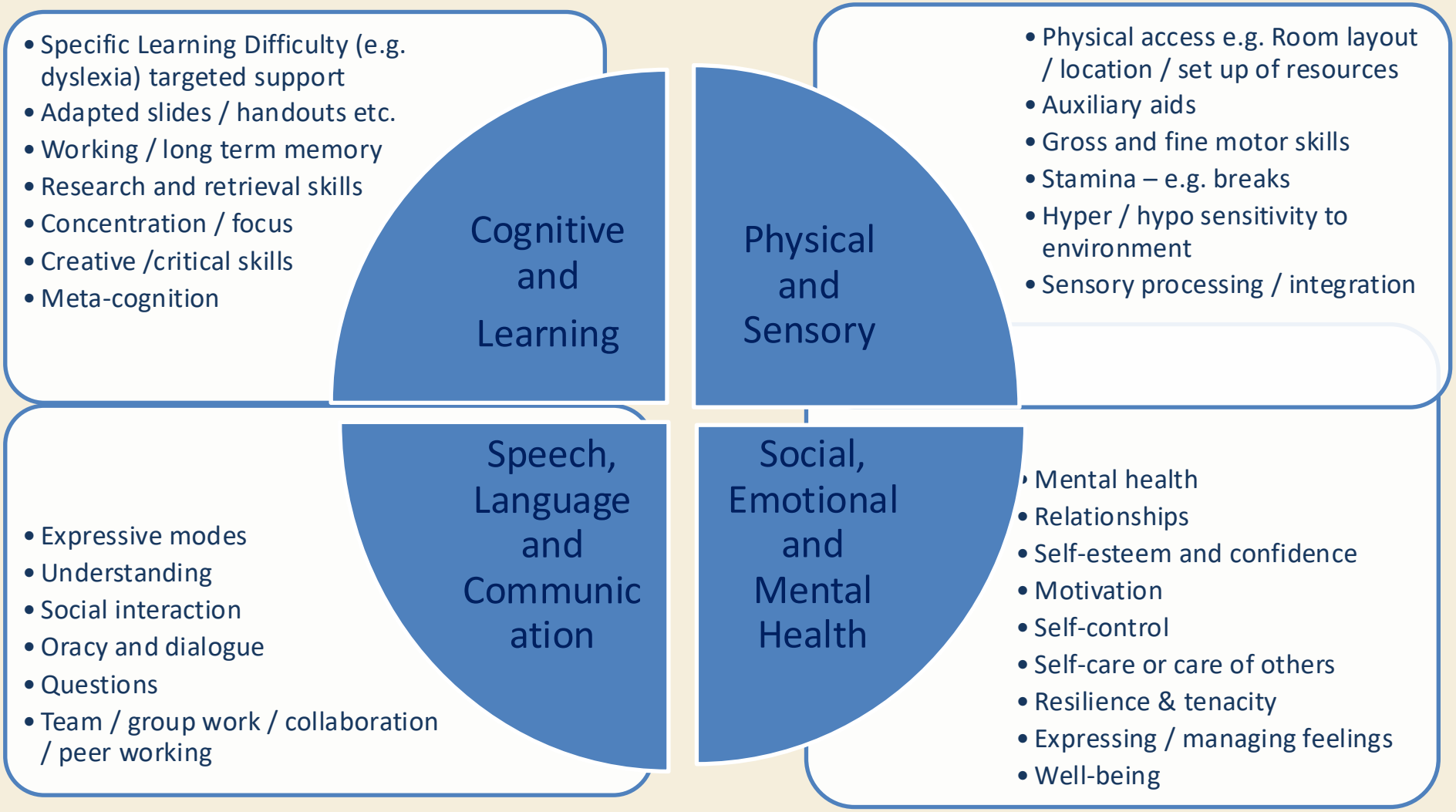
Anticipatory

Barrier-aware

Strengths-based

SEND is not about labels: it is about noticing before students fail

# Support considerations across the 4 areas of need




Lucy Sors

Example

# The Testing Effect: Retrieval practice as low-stakes ‘quizzing’

# Reducing anxiety and building confidence: low stakes practice – quiz formats for different needs

For students who freeze under pressure:

- Open-book quizzes initially
- "Phone a friend" option (can ask one person one question)
- No time limits
- Can have second attempt immediately
- Self-marking with mark scheme provided

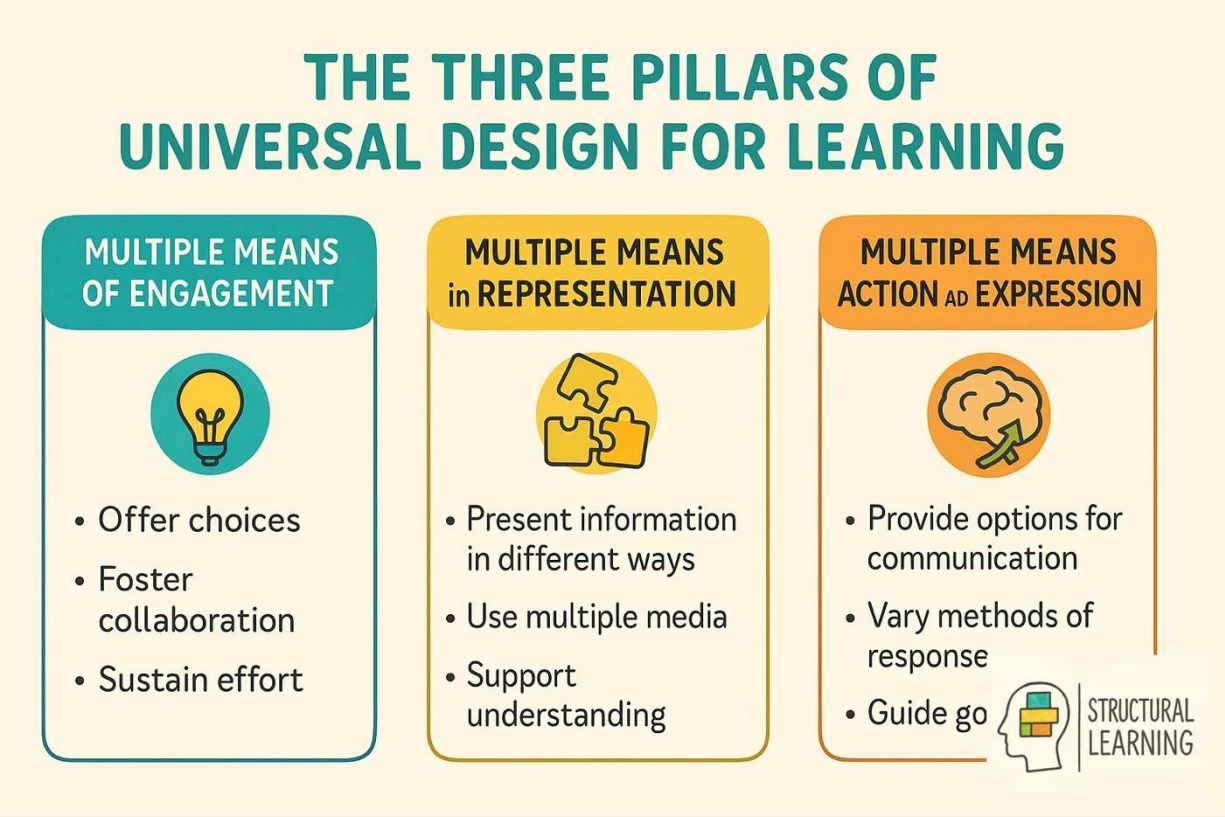
For students who need immediate feedback:

- Kahoot or Wayground [Quizizz] (instant results, gamified)
- Self-checking flashcards (answer on reverse)
- Online quizzes with instant scoring
- Partner quizzes where students swap and mark

For students who struggle with writing:

- Multiple choice questions
- Drag-and-drop digital activities
- Verbal quizzes (speak answers instead of write)
- Point to answer options

# Universal Design for Learning [UDL]




UDL emphasises the creation of instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that are inherently flexible.

Build accessibility into initial planning, ensuring lessons naturally accommodate diverse learning needs

The ‘why’ of learning

The ‘what’ of learning

The ‘how’ of learning

# A familiar student

Meets entry requirements

Capable

Motivated

Quietly struggling

Makes few notes

Disorganised

Starting to fall behind

Questions.

Whose knowledge counts?

Whose practices are rewarded?

# Under compassion

Concern
Adjustment
Referral

# Under adaptive pedagogy

Anticipatory – Responsive – Ethically reflexive
Access designed in
High expectations preserved

# Science and health disciplines

Amount of substantive content

Challenges of disciplinary practices

Pace

Abstraction

Cognitive load in dense content disciplines

# Not lowering standards…

but clarifying access to them:

- Reduce extraneous cognitive load
- Scaffold intrinsic cognitive load
- Multiple representations in scientific explanation
- Dialogue vs performative “participation”
- Assessment formats privileging certain processing styles
- Lab/practical teaching as a sensory and social experience

# Choice in methods – modality options

Written Options:

- Traditional notes
- Mind maps
- Bullet point summaries
- Question and answer format
- Create quiz questions for others

Verbal Options:

- Record voice explanations
- Teach someone else (family, friend, study group)
- Create podcasts or ‘revision radio’
- Answer questions out loud (record for playback)

Creative Options:

- Create posters or infographics
- Make revision videos (screencast or self-recording)
- Build models or demonstrations
- Design board games or card games about topics
- Write songs or raps
- Create TikTok-style short videos

Digital Options:

- Build a revision website or blog
- Create PowerPoint presentations
- Design Canva infographics
- Make Quizlet sets
- Use Padlet or OneNote for organised notes

# Pedagogy

- Learning intentions and success criteria
- Thinking activities & Processing levels
- Graphic Organisers
- Outcomes and products
- Evidence of learning

## Unistructural to Multistructural

Quantitative. Gives one piece of information in response moving to giving several pieces of information. No reasons or linkage given. May recall facts without understanding or find information from the text.

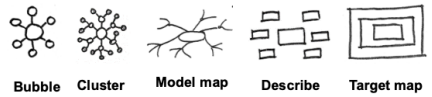
**Key command verbs**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ask | Generalise | Measure Name | Rephrase |
| Choose | Give examples | Observe | Report |
| Cite Copy | Identify | Outline Quote | Reproduce |
| Define | Illustrate | Read | Retell |
| Demonstrate | Indicate | Recall | Restate |
| Discuss | Infer Interpret | Recite | Review |
| Duplicate | Label | Recognise | Select |
| Estimate | List | Record | Show Spell |
| Express Extend | Locate | Remember | State |
| Find | Match | Repeat | Summarise |
| | | | Tell Write |

**Outcomes and Products**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cartoon | Examples | Photograph | Story |
| Chart Collage | Explanation | Poster Quiz | Summary |
| Collection | Fact | Recording | Table |
| Definition | Glossary | Reproduction | Test |
| Diagram | Label List | Show and tell | Workbook |
| Dictionary | Outline | Speech | Worksheet |

**Graphic Organiser**




**Questions/Stems [What, When, Where, Which, Who]**

What is ...? What happened...?
When did ...? When was...?
Where did...? Where is...?
Which one ...? List three ...
Can you recall ...?
Can you choose/select ...?
Who was ...? Who were...?
Label the main parts of...
Estimate/Outline which...

Define/ describe ...
Which facts or ideas show that...?
How would you summarise ...?
What examples can you find to ..?
Identify the characteristics of...
What can you say about ...?
Demonstrate when/where...
Who/What were the key...?
What is the main idea of ...?

**SOLO Taxonomy Pedagogy Planning Toolkit**

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## Relational

Quantitative and Qualitative. Shows how several pieces of information link together, seems purposeful or strategic. Can demonstrate integration of facts and ideas. Application to new and unfamiliar situations.

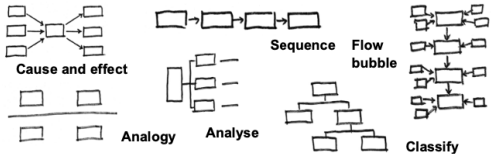
**Key command verbs**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Analyse Apply | Dissect Divide | Manipulate | Select |
| Appraise Arrange | Dramatise | Order | Separate |
| Associate | Employ Establish | Organise | Sequence |
| Breakdown | Examine Execute | Perform | Show Simplify |
| Calculate | Experiment Find | Plan Practice | Simulate Solve |
| Carry out | Focus Group | Prioritize | Summarise |
| Categorise Choose | Illustrate | Question Rank | Survey |
| Classify Connect | Implement Infer | Reason Relate | Tabulate Teach |
| Construct Correlate | Interpret | Reorganise | Transfer |
| Demonstrate | Interview | Represent | Translate |
| Develop Discover | Investigate Link | Research | Use |

**Outcomes and Products**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Analogy | Diary | Journal | Questionnaire |
| Analysis | Draft | Model | Report |
| Argument | Drama Filmstrip | Performance | Sculpture |
| Cartoon Conclusion | Forecast Graph | Poster | Simulation |
| Demonstration | Illustration | Presentation | Survey |
| Diagram | Interview | Project Puzzle | Syllogism |

**Graphic Organiser**




**Questions/Stems [Previous, plus How, Why]**

Explain what is happening when...
How is .....analogous to....?
How would you use/ apply....?
How would you organise ..... to show ...?
What is meant by. . .?
Use your findings to develop ....?
What conclusions can you draw ...?
How would you explain ...?
Why did ...? What would result if ...?
What facts or ideas would you select to prove ...?
Identify the different parts of...?
Illustrate which parts/ features of ...?
What is the function of ...?
How does.....occur?

Prioritize/ Rank/Sequence....?
What is the relationship between...?
What contributions do.....make to..?
Is this a correlation or a causation?
What is the theme of...?
Why does the character...?
What motive is shown by ...?
Using what we have practised, how would you solve...?
Why do you think ...?
What inference can you make ...?
How would you categorise/ classify ...?
What evidence can you find ...?
Give reasons why ...?

## Extended Abstract

Quantitative and Qualitative. Goes beyond relational to make links to other concepts/generalises to a different domain or context. Justifying; presenting & defending opinions; weighing validity/ quality with respect to established criteria. Aspects of creation & originality.

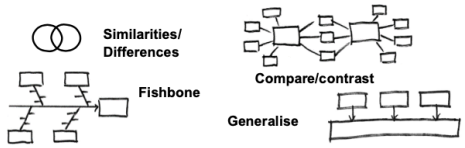
**Key command verbs**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Adapt | Decide Deduct | Explain Extend | Produce |
| Appraise | Defend Design | Formulate | Propose Prove |
| Argue Assess | Determine | Hypothesise | Rate |
| Build Change | Develop Devise | Imagine Improve | Recommend |
| Combine | Disprove | Infer Influence | Revise Solve |
| Compare | Discover Dispute | Innovate Integrate | Speculate |
| Compose | Distinguish | Invent Interpret | Substitute |
| Conclude | Elaborate | Judge Justify | Test Theorise |
| Construct | Estimate | Model Modify | Transform |
| Convert Create | Evaluate | Perceive Persuade | Validate |
| Criticise Debate | Experiment | Predict Prioritise | Visualise |

**Outcomes and Products**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Abstract Article | Database | Plan Play Poem | Set of rules or |
| Advertisement | Experiment Film | Project | principles Song |
| Book | Game | Recommendation | Story |
| Chart Checklist | Graph Invention | Report | Spreadsheet |
| Comic Strip | Media Product | Role play | Storyboard |
| Court trial | Painting | Self-evaluation | Survey |

**Graphic Organiser**




**Questions/Stems [Previous, plus How, Why, *could*, *might*]**

How would you evaluate/ adapt/improve...?
How could you determine...?
Assess the value/importance of...?
What is your opinion of...?
Do you support the outcomes/ actions of...? What would you recommend...?
What would you select/how would you justify...?
How would you prove/disprove...?
Why did they (person/character) choose...?
How would you rank/prioritise the...?
Which is the best answer/model ...?
What might happen if you combined ...?
What would happen if...?

What data supports the conclusion and why...?
How would you adapt ..... to create a different...?
What could be done to minimise (or maximise)...?
How would you create/design a new ...? What ideas can you add to ...?
What would you predict/infer from ...? What changes would you make to solve ...?
Can you propose an alternative...?
Can you formulate a theory for/ hypothesise why...?
What solutions would you suggest for ...?

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# Participation is not neutral

Talk for learning

Confidence

Speed

Modelling

Multiple representations

Pace and transition

Structured group work

Alternative ways of demonstrating competence

# Three reframing questions

Who adapts to whom?

What is individualised that should be universal?

What do we mean by rigour?

# Inclusion is intellectual work

Compassion is necessary, but it is not sufficient.

Inclusion requires curriculum design and pedagogical courage.

Thank you.