Question 1: How do you design an inclusive curriculum from the very beginning of your process?

Jade Lam (Chinese Brush Painting): I always tried to be flexible in terms of material used, painting styles, classroom setup, etc. I'll give you an example. Some of my students can't see very well or they can't distinguish color very well. So I try to be flexible, in terms of material used, and I try to ask them to use high contrast color combinations to paint, such as black and white.

Dane Stauffer (Theatre + Storytelling): The main thing is to create a curriculum that's adaptable, because I try to be inclusive and I try to anticipate, but I'm still learning too. And so some of my inclusive ideas have had to adapt when I've been faced with reality. I think it helps to have a healthy dose of grace and to be transparent - to be willing to show up as a fellow lifelong learner along with my students.

Antonia Perez (Drawing + Painting): I want to make sure, first of all, that there's adequate space for everyone to move around the room safely. That there's comfortable seating for everyone and lighting and that the tools and the materials we're using are adaptable to an individual's fine motor abilities. And then if there are people that don't speak English or Spanish, which are the two languages that I speak, then I try to ensure that there would be somebody to interpret from them, for them.

Question 2: How do you assess students' needs in an in-person space without making it obvious?

Sarah Jacobus (Creative Writing): There's several ways that I assess student needs, and one of them is by a very short writing exercise early in the first session, which is asking students to write three sentences that encapsulate as clearly as possible why they've come to the class and what they're hoping to get from it. Sometimes I do it in the form of filling in the blanks. I'm here because what I'd like to get out of this class is. And also to make sure that they understand this is not an evaluation, and that it's really to get a sense of who's there and what the interests and goals are.

Jade Lam (Chinese Brush Painting): I always try to have a very, non-intimidating opening activity for my students. When I say non-intimidating, this is one of the examples. You can see it is just straight lines and it's a way to warm up my students' hands. But by doing this exercise, it can help me to assess if there are any students who have trouble following instructions or have problems with fine motor skills. As you can see, this is just really dotting and line exercise. So nothing very specific or difficult.

Antonia Perez (Drawing + Painting): I may find out later on that there's going to be somebody. For example, I had a person in my class who had arthritis. She didn't necessarily want to share that right away, but she had pain in her hand. And she said to me she was having a hard time drawing because her hand hurt. And so I adapted her pencil to make a thick holder so that she could put her fingers around it with less pain.

Dane Stauffer (Theatre + Storytelling): I have a conversation about safe space, and I find that the culminating event is a great teaching tool for this. "We're going to tell our stories in seven weeks. When I say that, who feels nervous?" Hands go up, a few hands don't. Then I'll say, "Who feels nervous, but doesn't want to admit it?" And then we talk about nervousness? Well, "I'm afraid I'll be judged. I'm afraid. I'll make a mistake. I'll get laughed at. I'll be less than. I won't feel like I belong." These are classic responses. And so then we talk about what we can do for each other to help each other grow through that? And we talk about what active listening is, and we talk about creating a safe space where whether or not judgments are bubbling up in our head or not, we can set them aside because we're actively creating a judgment free listening space.

Question 3: How do you assess students' needs in a remote learning environment?

Antonia Perez (Drawing + Painting): Usually what I have people do is send their work to me by email and the next section I share it. If I find that somebody is not speaking up and not sharing their work, then I'll reach out to them and ask them if the class is meeting their expectations or if there's anything I can do to make it better for them. I've also had people call in to a class because they didn't have the computer set up, but they wanted to follow the lesson. So, if I know that they can't see what's going on on the screen, then I'll adapt by describing what's going on.

Dane Stauffer (Theatre + Storytelling): There's certain things where I pair people off when we're live that I could do that in breakout rooms, but then I don't get to watch. And that's an assessment thing for me. So that's an example where I just don't even try to do that. I just might talk to them. I usually play this game when we're live, and here's what we do. And why don't we just all practice that with me talking and you listening. You know, I do my best to adapt to it. And if I'm still learning about the adaptation, again, I'll be transparent. I say, "I'm still adjusting this thing from my live teaching, and I'm still trying to get the hang of it on zoom. Let's try this, and then maybe you can tell me afterwards if it worked for you." Again, when in doubt, just be transparent.

Sarah Jacobus (Creative Writing): One particular student had a very, very soft speaking voice, which made it difficult for other writers in the class who had some degree of hearing impairment to hear her. At times I asked her, "Is it alright with you if I echo what you're saying so everyone can hear you?" And that was alright with her and actually created a really nice sort of rhythm where she spoke, I echoed, and it not only made it more accessible for students, but it was an alternative way of sharing the work.

Question 4: How do you advocate for your students' needs at the places you teach?

Sarah Jacobus (Creative Writing): I've been teaching creative writing primarily in a senior apartment complex, in which the nonprofit, under whose auspices I teach, provides arts and culture programming. And at this property there is a program director, and I've worked with several of them over these last several years. But it's very important to establish a good relationship with that person. Someone who is really supportive of the class, who I share information with about what's going on in the class, to really try to cultivate a rapport with that person so they're on our team and will do what they can to support the class. And I also really try to instill enthusiasm in the program director and the property manager who's in the building when we do a culminating event so that everyone who's connected with this property and this program, feels some investment in the creative writing program and wants to support it.

Antonia Perez (Drawing + Painting): I'm just thinking of this one center that I worked in where they offered programs for youth in the center, although they had what they call the senior center, but they did not offer any art class. And the people who were attending their senior program demanded an art class. They advocated for themselves. And then once I came in with an art class, I found out that there were a number of people who had home health aides and who also came with wheelchairs, and the space wasn't adequate. And the organization had not provided for those health aides to accompany the people that they were working with to the class. So that was a point where I could advocate for, "Oh yes, we want all of the people who are assisting the attendees of the class to also attend the class, and we also want a clear path, and you have to give us more seating," and that sort of thing. But they do it because they want it to be successful. They want it to last more than that one time.