

Cultural competencies essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Cultural Diversity](#)



In order to understand the meaning of cultural competence, I agree that this term lines up with the similar term of cultural diversity. Culture summarizes various aspects. There are a number of cultural factors, which have direct implications for teaching and learning.

Teachers need to be responsive to individual ethnic groups' cultural values, practices, language, learning preferences, involvement and familial patterns. Today's teachers must also be more than just aware or respectful of the idea that ethnic groups have distinct values or they may display similar values in unique ways (Gay, 2002). There are many contributions that various ethnic groups have made to certain subject areas, and too many teachers are unaware of these accomplishments. To accommodate cultural diversity, teachers must convert the curriculum into “culturally responsive curriculum designs and instructional strategies” (Gay, 2002, pg.

108). This can be achieved by performing in depth cultural analyses of textbooks. In my opinion, this will take an amazing amount of time and many teachers would not have the available free time perform this needed act. So, really more realistic methods to accommodate for cultural diversity are needed. In knowing that cultural diversity is important in the educational environment, how can a school and/or classroom implement the strategies for becoming cultural diversity? One way I believe cultural diversity can be introduced and used in the classroom is by sharing of individual cultures from the students themselves. At this particular time, many inner-city schools are made up of the majority of the race that surrounds the school.

Depending on the ethnic make-up of the surrounding neighborhoods, those individuals include African American, Hispanics and Caucasians. Each ethnic background has their own way of tackling various areas of their growth. Those areas of growth would be: education, respect towards adults, view on loyalty and the involvement of parents and/guardians. I believe that as an educator, it is the duty of the school and teacher to be aware of those various areas in order to be better connected to the culture diversity and which would make you better culture competent. One way I saw this achieved in my school (fifth grade classroom) was having each student bring in an ethnic dish of their choice and sharing it with the class.

Although my school make-up is about 96% African American, the students all had various, some the same, differently made dishes. Even with this, they were able to experience a “taste” of cultural difference. Another way to easily accommodate and celebrate diversity in the classroom is to have parents or family members of the students come in to the classroom during a specific holiday and share with the class their holiday practices. I saw this done by a student at Cardinal Ritter High School, where my daughter attends, of the Indian faith whose mother came in to read a story about a holiday and share an old-fashioned craft with the class.

In knowing and understanding the importance of cultural diversity, continued growth in this area will allow us to become well equipped and valuable in the signature of being well-rounded known as cultural competence. Being recognized as Cultural Competent is the realistic understanding and acceptance of the beliefs, values, and ethics of others as well as the

demonstrated skills necessary to work with and serve diverse individuals and groups. This involves a first-hand understanding, awareness, and respect for the beliefs, values, and ethics of other cultures and the cross-cultural skills necessary for delivering services and working with diverse individuals and groups.

The importance or responsibility of the federal law No Child Left Behind sheds the light on achievement gaps between diverse clusters of students. This federal law has placed pressure on schools and/or especially teachers, to see that all students succeed, regardless of their ethnic, education or language background. Schools are required to meet state milestone called “Adequate Yearly Progress” (AYP) goals for their total student residents and for specified demographic subcategories, including major ethnic/racial groups, economically disadvantaged students, limited English speaking students and students with specified disabilities. Unfortunately if schools fail to meet AYP goals for two or more years, they are classified as schools “in need of improvement” and face consequences.

A broad approach works best to address achievement gaps. Being in tune with the learning environment and one’s students, along with the wrap-around support from the parents/guardians, would assist with building positive and successful strategies for reaching academic success of the students. A key problem may be or could be found in the literature that the students use daily. The problem with accommodating for cultural diversity in the classroom is the issue of public communication styles. In different cultural groups there are unique roles of the speaker and listener when

communicating. For example, some African-Americans use a call-response method of communicating; Native-Hawaiians use a method called talk-story. These communication patterns can prove problematic in a classroom if a teacher is uninformed of this particular way of communicating. To accommodate for this type of diversity, the teacher needs to handle a situation involving communal communication styles of a particular ethnic group very cautiously because denying a child of their natural way of speaking can inadvertently stifle their academic achievement.

Preparing teachers more effectively to work with diverse groups of students is another issue in accommodating cultural diversity in the classroom.

Teachers cannot accommodate for cultural diversity if they are unaware of the unique aspects of different ethnic groups. Teacher preparation programs must provide more thorough understanding of students who are not from the United States' ethnic, racial and cultural norm. Future teachers need to learn more about how specific cultures of certain ethnic groups affect learning strategies, behavior, communication, and classroom interactions (Gay, 2002).

I feel that there is not enough time in teacher preparation to go over every ethnic groups' culture but I think an effort should be made to focus upon the majority of ethnic groups in a certain area where a future teacher may be teaching. For example, I read on the internet that in the Miami area there is a large population of Cubans so maybe teacher preparation programs in Florida should include aspects of the Cuban culture for example. With the Hispanic culture quickly rising in the Indiana area as well, this could be the

same issue in our schools. Teacher preparation classes should also include the opportunity for future teachers to become aware of their own cultural beliefs that affect their behavior (Lin and Kinzer, 2003).