

Creating atmosphere

[Science](#), [Astronomy](#)



Creating an atmosphere of tolerance, acceptance and caring requires a consistent effort to understand the students who come from different cultures. It is important to treat their cultural and linguistic backgrounds as valid and equal to our own background. Treating their cultures as important and respectable creates an atmosphere of mutual trust and collaboration among the students. The broader understanding should reflect in every aspect of the academic institution. Building multicultural class room is an ongoing process and it requires consistent investment of time, money and effort.

The diversity of students in today's classrooms underscores the importance of developing curricula, teaching strategies, and policies to help all students succeed in school. (Ingram, 2000) The diversity of students in the class room calls for creating an atmosphere of caring, understanding, and accepting other cultures. Treating the cultures as valid, equal and important is fundamental in creating an atmosphere that fills confidence in both the teacher and the taught.

Creating such an atmosphere becomes impossible unless the authorities who run the institution believe in the philosophy of understanding, acceptance and respect for other cultures. The process of creating an atmosphere of tolerance and acceptance begins with the very mission statement of the institution. The issues and needs of multi-cultural class room should be analyzed and understood and the learning from the same should reflect in the action plan.

The analysis should take into account the problems and challenges of the faculty members, the fears and doubts of the students and the different

aspects of administration of the school management. When every department in the institution follows the same action plan and philosophy and show the same spirit it becomes easier for the students to imbibe the same. Especially in the class room where people from five different ethnic groups are present, the question of creating an atmosphere of tolerance, acceptance and caring attains greater significance.

The class room which has students from India, China, Kenya, Arabia, and Europeans along with the native students, it is most essential to foster an atmosphere of confidence and freedom for the students to have a healthy intellectual growth. The recognition and acceptance of students from all backgrounds and culture is essential to the concept of multi-cultural education. Multicultural education is a reform movement whose major goal is to change the structure of educational institutions so that all students have an equal chance to achieve academically in school.

(Mungai, 2008) The diversity of students in the class room makes it more challenging for the faculty and the administration to create an atmosphere of acceptance, tolerance, and trust. For the students the class room not only opens up a new world of learning experiences but also challenges them in understanding, welcoming and accepting new cultures of other students. The role of the teacher in that multi-cultural class room acquires greater significance as he is challenged with the double task of teaching the subject and creating an atmosphere of care and understanding.

Teachers embracing multiculturalism will offer for some of their students the first opportunity to stand in the center of life's stage. They will demonstrate that the democratic ideals on which this country was founded apply to their

school life and to their personal lives. (Josephine Scott, 2001) Teachers feel it a daunting task to deal with the students effectively in a multi cultural class room. Being aware of their weaknesses and drawbacks in dealing with all types of students is helpful in overcoming those challenges.

When dealing with students it is not unusual for some teachers to feel comfortable with some students and uncomfortable with certain other students. Naturally it will leave different impressions on the students and it may also influence in giving grades to the students. Hence, evaluation of teaching practices and class room behavior and reflecting on the same plays a crucial role in modifying the approach of the teachers. Inviting other teachers and taking feed back from students and peers will go a long way in overcoming many of the problems.

Making the content of the lessons multi cultural in subjects, though it is not possible in all the subjects, will expose the students to different cultures. Teacher's self assessment about his level of consciousness and awareness of other races, religion and cultures helps him a lot in planning the class room activity effectively. Talking about the crucial role of teachers in creating a multicultural class room, Betty Wilson highlights the importance of teachers learning of new cultures.

She says: I think it's very important for teachers to know their own cultures very well and study their own cultures, because then they begin to become more reflective listeners. They look at other people's cultures in a different light, and they begin to see the similarities and differences in their cultures. It becomes a journey in a classroom of learning, because by the teacher

sharing their own culture, then the students are more open to that. (Wilson, 2000)

As Betty Wilson, the director of multicultural education at Oak Park School, rightly points out learning other cultures will be an enriching experience This demands not only learning new things and cultivating new habits but also unlearning old habits and beliefs. A resource center rich in solutions for the teachers solves many of the dilemmas of the teacher of multi-cultural class room. Sharing the experiences of other faculty members across the university or other institutions will be immensely useful for solving many of the issues in the day to day activities in the class room.

Creating opportunities for knowing other cultures about their history and present situation and problems should be made a part of academic curricula. Planning on campus or off campus events teachers and their assistant will have a better understanding of the needs of young people who are members of different cultures. A multi-cultural celebration day is a wonderful idea for all the students who come from different cultures to express themselves freely and to recognize and understand the importance of other cultures.

Setting up a bulletin board that gives equal importance to all the five different cultures without hurting the feelings of others is major step in announcing the multi-cultural festival. The board provides ample space for exhibiting the important or representative symbols all the cultures that are present in the class room. Assigning the work to the students to create their own poster expressing their cultural values and symbols encourages all the students and involves every student in the work. Monitoring their work

without any interference in their creative expression is a delicate task and it should be dealt with very sensitively.

Giving clear instructions in advance will solve many delicate issues. For example, informing the students clearly the place of their poster on the bulletin board following an objective method like the alphabetical order avoids scope for conflict. In fact, to create multicultural class room is a continuous process. It does not end with a multicultural festival. It requires careful planning and meticulous execution over a period of time to establish strongly a base for multicultural class room environment. It will not happen in a day or a semester.

It is a demanding work for life long involving learning and unlearning. Creating a healthy multicultural class room is not just the work of the class teacher only. It needs active participation of every teaching and non teaching staff member of the institution. The support and leadership of the authorities who run the institution and the participation of all the departments are the foundation on which the edifice of a multicultural class room can be built. Of course, the process is bound to have certain occasional failures and setbacks but the process should be an ongoing one.

It requires a lot of determination, time, effort and money and the investment of all these are worth building a multicultural world for a happy and healthy coexistence. It calls for a long-term investment, an investment in our own growth and change as well as in our students and in the university and society of which they and we will continue to be a part. (Mark Chesler, 2003)

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A Sample Bulletin Board to be created