

Cultural diversity and today's teacher

[Profession](#), [Teacher](#)



Cultural Diversity & Today's Teacher Education in America has evolved through out its history and has become a major necessity to excel in the work force, just imagine 100 years ago graduating high school in many areas was rare, twenty-five years ago a high school diploma was a must to find a good job and now college and mostly likely grad school is expected by many young adults in order to ensure financial security in life. So if education is evolving then the instructors which provide the information and lessons to our children must also evolve with the ever changing tides the educational field presents today. One of the most notable differences is the students in the class rooms, with different ethnic groups more intertwined than ever teachers have been exposed to a much different class room setting than those that had came before them. Today's teachers must open their minds and evolve into the next generation of instructors and in order to do so they will have to become more aware and sensitive to a more diverse classroom " The need to create a teaching force that is culturally sensitive is undeniable. According to The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education teacher candidates must develop proficiencies for working with students from diverse backgrounds; dispositions that respect and value differences, and skills for working in diverse settings.[...] As teacher educators, we hope that cultural diversity classes will help out students become aware of their own beliefs and become more culturally diverse." (The Ethnography Project p1) Cultural diversity, it's a phrase we have all heard at sometime or another but what does it mean for teachers and the way they go about designing lesson plans, delivering lectures, grading and any other aspect of teaching that comes to mind. Teachers can no longer expect to have a class room in

which all the students are primarily from the same cultural background and even in the majority are to be an effective teacher he or she must reach all the students even those in the minority. To achieve this, instructors must first understand and be sensitive towards different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. " The ways in which people converse with one another can vary greatly from culture to culture. For example, when a teacher asks a direct question, students from some cultures may not immediately respond. To answer quickly might be considered disrespectful and might indicate that not enough thought had been given to the question. But, if the teacher makes a casual observation or comment, that student might feel more comfortable about responding and joining in a discussion. Also, it helps to remember that people from some minority groups find the challenging often coercive, conversational style of many North Americans to be quite intimidating."(Effective Schools Research p1) That excerpt from one of the journal articles I researched gives a good example of how a teacher can reach out to minority students and make sure that they get involved and the great their involvement the less likely they are to fall behind. However it is not enough to simply recognize that certain students are different but the teacher must be able to understand that a student's perception of a lot of things has to do with where he or she comes from. For example an inner city student shows no interest in learning he sleeps in class does poorly on tests and rarely turns in his home work assignments. At a glance a teacher would simply look at this student and think that he I just not intelligent and has no hope of achieving an education. But a cultural sensitive teacher does not just glance he or she opens their mind to think why this student is acting in such

a manner, maybe he sleeps in class because he lives in a dangerous household and is afraid to sleep, maybe their lack of interest in class is because the student is worried about things at home, perhaps his grades and test scores are low because education is not a priority at home. There are many possibilities that could be holding this student back from succeeding and by being open minded and culturally sensitive the teacher will be better able to help him and give him a better opportunity at learning. " Cultural diversity poses a pedagogical and social challenge to educators. Teaching effectively in culturally diverse classrooms means using culturally sensitive strategies and content to ensure equitable opportunities for academic success, personal development, and individual fulfillment for all students. Teachers need to be " knowledgeable about how minority children perceive the world, and process and organize information." (Preparing Teachers... p2) As for me I found myself asking a common question among education students, why do I need to know about all these cultural issues when the community I wish to teach in seems to have little cultural diversity? First of all what we see at first glance is not often the same as when we are in the situation full time and teachers may also reject or ignore the signs of diversity because of personal perceptions and biases. However the numbers do not lie in the following excerpt you will see just how diverse the " normal" class room is becoming and it may change perspective on your own community. " Minority children are quickly becoming the majority in a world where a more powerful minority sets the rules. National and regional demographic changes and distribution shifts document an increasing minority student population. One in three served by schools in urban setting with populations greater than 500, 000, is

a person of color, lives in poverty, or has multiple learning handicaps. Between 1980 and 1990, the total foreign-born population grew by 40%, and most of our recent immigrants come from non-European non-English speaking countries. Over 16 percent of all school children are African American and 9% Hispanic." (Preparing Teachers... p1-2) In that same report it also noted percentages of ethnic groups by states and for Illinois the results were: Black- 21%, Hispanic-9. 8%, and a total minority population of 34. 2%. These are all pretty staggering numbers and will only continue to increase with time so, it would be foolish of anyone going into the education field to think that cultural diversity will not affect them. Ok so we understand that it is we cannot hide from cultural diversity and agree that teachers must reach out to all students and teach with an open mind but how do we go about teaching tomorrow's teachers about culturally diverse education. The best way to be sure that they will become multicultural teachers is to make sure that they are inspired to be open minded and present a positive attitude towards the challenges that are presented in today's diverse classrooms. Teachers should also be multi cultural people they should understand other cultures and their own and be able to relate to both. JoAnn Parla also described a way to prepare future teachers for the class room in the following excerpt. " To prepare all teachers to provide more effective instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students, many of whom are LEP, a teacher education model with three major components is proposed. The model consists of three basis Theoretical base, The Cultural and linguistic base, and the Experimental base." (Educating Teachers... p2) She goes on to describe each bas in detail but in short the basis is set much

like this. The theoretical base emphasizes on basic definitions, knowledge of issues and self identity as they relate multicultural and multi linguistic education. The cultural and linguistic base focuses on the competencies teachers should have in those areas, for example they should have some knowledge of language development and favorably a second language. They should also be knowledgeable of the relationships between language and culture, techniques for assisting students in the classroom and in language development and finally experience with diverse populations. The Experiential base talks about receiving hands on experience. This would be much like our observations at Illinois College. This allows the student to go in their field and learn from both experience and mentors such as teachers and administrators. She also discusses a mentor training program where the student or trainee is involved in activities but are also faced with certain challenges such as: " time constraints, class sizes, required curriculum, and the structure of programs, disjuncture between schools and communities, and the administrative and bureaucratic context of teacher work."

(Educating Teachers... p6) As you can see through out this paper there are many challenges dealing with diversity that are facing the teachers of tomorrow. They must design their class room, lesson plans, and style to make sure every student is given the best opportunity to learn. These challenges maybe difficult and overwhelming at times but if one can tackle these challenges head on in a positive manner then they have taken the first step in not only becoming a multicultural instructor but a great teacher.

Aboriginal Education.(2005) Effective Schools Research. Chisholm, M Ines. (1999). The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students. v

14 43-68 Harding, Nancy. (2005). The Ethnography Project: A Method for increasing Sensitivity in Teacher Candidates. Parla, JoAnn. (1999). The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students. v 9 p1-6. Stewart, Kerry.(2005) Education Gazette v 84. n 4. 7 march 2005. Van Hook, W. Cheryl.(2000) Clearinghouse on Early Education and parenting- Preparing Teachers for The Diverse Classroom.