

# Diversity in education

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



As the student population in our elementary schools becomes increasingly more diverse, teachers must amend their current ways of thinking and teaching to be considerate of the multiple cultures that are now present in their classrooms. Teachers, themselves, must be open to new ideas that different cultures will present as well as a mass of culturally based viewpoints. Diversity in the classroom is not something that can be ignored or shoved under the rug, but it must be acknowledged, accepted, understood and then taught. Understanding and acceptance are the keys to unifying not only a group of students but also our nation as a whole. W. H. Auden, an English poet, had this to say about diversity, " Civilizations should be measured by the ' degree of diversity attained and the degree of unity retained'". Diversity is not only a race issue. Diversity can also be found in a classroom full of students with a variety of learning styles and abilities. All of these differences are what make each of us unique in our own special way. It is because of these variations, not in spite of, that people, young and old, are drawn together. If each child in every classroom were an exact replica of the next, where would the beauty be? Where would the excitement come from? I feel that it is our job, as educators, to embrace these variations and to teach children that being exactly who you are, is great. Since I was old enough to remember I have been teased for wearing glasses. When I was two years old, I had to have corrective eye surgery and since that time, I have worn glasses and then contacts as I got older. Especially in elementary school, boys would pick on me and call me names and the girls would giggle and point. Of course, I did not understand at the time why the other children did not have to wear glasses like myself but I knew that I could not see without them.

Then the magical day came when my teacher defended me for the last time by telling my classmates that my glasses made me smarter because I could see better than they could. Looking back on it now, perhaps her response was not entirely appropriate but it did do the trick. My classmates became my friends and my glasses were not an issue again. I believe that no matter what the "thing" is that makes each student unique, all of the variations should be celebrated. For where one child may be black, that is only the color of his skin and he is also the Spelling Bee Champ three years in a row. Or because one little girl has a lisp and is passed over for the lead in the school play, she is an amazing artist. Although the outside of each of us is quite different, there is something that is unique and wonderful about us all. These treasures are what I will help my students uncover and fully discover. There are many ways in which diversity can be celebrated within a classroom. I will select a different child each week and spotlight that individual. They will be able to make a poster about themselves and their family and where they are from. This spotlighted child will also be given time each day to tell a favorite story from their past or something that is unique about themselves. I do not believe that it is necessarily about teaching all students about Christmas, Kwanzaa and Hanukkah but rather about individuality and seeing beyond the exterior. In my classroom, variations will be the norm. Every child will be accepted for who they are- unique and beautiful with endless potential and undiscovered talents. Learning to accept diversity will come naturally because I will not point out nor will I allow others to point out these differences. In addition to this, I will set up a "Compliment Box" in our room for my students to contribute to. The idea behind this box is

that students will expand their minds to see the nice things about others that they do not necessarily hang out with very often. When these compliments are read each week, it will also serve as a time to build up their self esteems. I have seen this work in classrooms before and it is amazing to hear what children will notice when given the opportunity in a safe haven. Diversity will always be a part of our world but ignorance and prejudice do not have to be. Teachers must instill in their students the willingness and openness to accept others, not in spite of but because of our differences. Cardboard, cookie cutter, identical children are not what make a remarkable