

# Multicultural education: the challenge

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Multicultural Education: The Challenge There is greater diversity in today's rooms than at any other time in our history. They come from widely diverse backgrounds, the material is more diverse, and there is a greater diversity of opinion than ever before. Managing this diversity requires the teacher to account for gender, ethnicity, race, and the cultural background of the students. Cultural diversity will present different learning styles as some students may learn from reading, while others demand examples. Some cultures learn by working alone, while more collective cultures may do better in a team setting. According to Banks (2006), "strategies that may be effective for one group of students may or may not be effective with another group that varies by attitudes, age, race, gender, and other demographic characteristics" (p. 611). Diversity and cultural traditions can add a valuable aspect to today's classrooms. However, they can also be a challenge when presenting material in a fair and balanced way.

It has been said that history is told by the victors, and in a diverse classroom, there may be students from both sides of historical conflicts. Presenting history in an unbiased fashion can be challenging, but including the students' opinions can help to mediate the differences. Bilingual discussions may be appropriate as a learning tool for all the students. Involving the students in greater class participation can bring in alternate viewpoints and different ways of viewing the same historical event. Clearly, education needs to take into account the different abilities of the students as well as their cultural perspective. Failure to take into account the differences in culture that exists in the diverse classroom will make any discussion of the curricula unimportant.

## References

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Banks, J. A. (2006). Improving race relations in schools: From theory and research to practice. *Journal of Social Issues*, 62(3), 607-614.

### Sexism in the Classroom

Sexism invades the classroom from several different fronts and results in a socialization of the male and female according to the gender ideal of the status quo. Sexism is reflected in the ways students are seated, the responses to students, the expectations, and the material. Creating a classroom with true gender equality requires the elimination of pre-conceived attitudes about gender's role, and the restructuring of the material to include the contribution of women.

Classroom teachers need to rethink the role that sexism plays in the attention and the responses that teachers give to students. Seating arrangements that favor boys in specific subjects need to be rearranged. In addition, the teacher's response to a student's answer should be the same for a boy and a girl. It has been reported that, " teachers give boys greater opportunity to expand ideas and be animated than they do girls" (Chapman, 2008). This is often especially true in math and science. In addition, a minimal answer may be acceptable from a female, while the teacher will have higher expectations from the male student.

The material needs to be rewritten to include the female's contribution to the subjects studied. This is especially true in the humanities and history. The curriculum is often constructed in a way that places male dominated endeavors as the most important. The Revolutionary War is a study of the battlefield exploits of men, but females were involved in several aspects of

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the war that are rarely mentioned in the history books. Science, business, and the arts all tend to reflect this sexist factor. Removing sexism from the classroom begins with the teacher and continues through the material.

#### References

Chapman, A. (2008). Gender bias in education. Retrieved February 11, 2009, from <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/papers/genderbias.html>