

Accommodating multicultural differences



**ASSIGN
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Multicultural education seeks to create equal educational opportunities for all students, including those from different racial, ethnic and social-class groups. Multicultural education tries to create equal educational opportunities for all students by changing the total school environments so that it will reflect the diverse cultures and groups within a society and within the nation's classrooms.

We will look at three different diverse groups, some common characteristics, challenges an educator may have to accommodate these groups and what special learning opportunities can be offered by such a group represented in a class. The three groups we will focus on by culture are Haitians, East Asians, and Hispanics. Some common characteristics they share are all these groups' value learning and education for their children, but they all face discrimination as well, from one time or another in and out of school.

They value family as the center of the social structure and consider the father as the lead, the decision maker, the authoritative figure. When these immigrants are mainstreamed into Western American schools, we cannot automatically assume they will merge into our culture, but look into the culture from whence they came in order to understand certain ways and behaviors they may exhibit. " Special challenges educators have for many, diverse immigrant families, the right to a formal education and all the trappings of school life for their children are very new concepts.

It is common for the children to quickly assimilate their peers " norms" about socializing, homework, growing sense of independence and other activities surrounding school. " (Kramer, 2000) These are just a few of these difference

of challenges a teacher will have to overcome to accommodate these groups. For instance, Americans, Haitians, and Hispanics upon meeting, shake hands, opposed to East Asians. East Asians bow, or nod their heads. When the other groups refer to themselves, they point to their chest. East Asians refer to themselves by pointing to their nose.

While some groups look at you when you talk, and this is considered respect, but the Asians look at it as being rude. Consider this, if you were at a table and someone blew their nose, you would consider that as being disrespectful or rude. Not the Asians. Here you can see how important it is to understand one's culture. What special learning opportunities can be offered by such a group represented in class? By teaching your students to value their differences, you are creating a truly global classroom and an appreciation of each other; you are showing them how to appreciate the rest of the world.

Expose the students to this variety of cultures throughout the term, which will enable them to be more tolerable of each other's differences. Make discussing the differences in cultures in your classroom an important part of what you and your students do together. Accept the concerns of parents or guardians who are not part of your culture, may be different from the concerns you may have. If you are sensitive to the potential differences when you speak with parents, you will find yourself asking questions that will help you determine what their goals for their children are before you attempt to impose your own beliefs.

Stress the importance of an open-minded attitude about people whose beliefs or lifestyles are different from those of your students, and make sure you

model that acceptance as well. Have activities and manipulative as a resource to explain the multi-culture of the diverse student(s) in your classroom. This way, everyone learns about each other. Even if you have lived in your community all your life, take time to learn about its various cultural groups. Understanding how these groups are represented in the school system will help you understand your students better.

Although teaching students from many cultures can be challenging, one of the most successes of the public school system in America is the variety of cultures that meet in the classrooms each day. At a time when school systems are scrutinized and criticized from many sides, classroom diversity is one of our nation's greatest assets. Although some people try to define culture in ethnic or racial terms, a broader definition is more accurate, "every person belongs to a variety of culture groups delineated by such features as geography, age, economics, gender, religion, interest, or educational level." (Diversity in the Community, 1999) Below is an outline of how Social Studies can be used to accommodate diverse students of grades Kindergarten - 12.

General Classroom Tips for Meeting Diverse Learning Needs

- Relate class to personal real life skills and experiences
- Limit expectations to two or three concepts per unit
- Evaluate projects rather than doing traditional testing
- Concentrate on student strengths and bring those strengths into the lesson
- Use concise written and oral directions (spoken, written, and oral).

- Use short answers rather than long essays
- Create small group activities
- Provide lecture outlines. Pre-teach concept vocabulary, draw pictures, use concept mapping, webbing, organizers, simplify vocabulary
- Be aware of academic levels so that reading, vocabulary, and problems can be addressed
- Model assignment expectations, show an example of the product
- Use multiple intelligences approaches to teaching the same lessons
- Use peer tutoring
- Use taped materials (text or study guides) (Teaching Strategies for Students with Diverse Learning Needs, 2011)

If you ignore the cultural differences among your students, you will create strife and tension. Conversely, if you choose to accept and celebrate those differences, you will find those differences to be a rich resource for your class. By incorporating strategies in the classroom to meet the needs of all the students, and having an environment showing the diverse cultures, every student will learn about each other and every student will receive an equal educational opportunity.