

Implementing diversity in the classroom

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? Running Header: Culturally Inclusive Classroom Final Reflection on Personal Growth and My Plan for a Culturally Inclusive Classroom Anna Novak July 27, 2009 EDUC 5173. 01 Dr. Gina Anderson Texas Woman's University Final Reflection on Personal Growth and My Plan for a Culturally Inclusive Classroom When I first began this semester I thought I had a clear definition of what diversity was and what areas it encompassed. I believed that the term diversity corresponded with issues of race, religion and ethnicity.

However, the discussion board assignments and the detailed chapter readings assigned throughout the semester soon broadened my understanding and notion of exactly what encompasses the term diversity. The concept of diversity encompasses acceptance and respect. It means understanding that each individual is unique, and recognizing our individual differences. These can be along the dimensions of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, or other ideologies.

It is the exploration of these differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment. It is about understanding each other and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each individual. This is one of the fundamental concepts I learned from participating in this course. When I first began my journey in this class I had no idea the impact it would have on me and shaping my philosophy as a teacher. I initially considered this a "breeze" through course, believing that I had a firm understanding of diversity, and how to address it within the classroom.

However, I soon learned that there was much I did not know about the levels of diversity, and how hard it would be to create an effective and practical diversity rich classroom. When I began this course and realized that several of my classmates were actual teachers or had some form of teaching experience, I immediately felt as though I was at a sort of disadvantage. I have personally never conducted a classroom, and have no practical experience. However, I soon realized that what I lacked in practical experience, I made up for with personal life experiences.

I learned that being a child of military parents and the different locations I had lived throughout my life had given me a unique ability to see view points and issues from completely different perspectives. In fact, I think having never taught a class before presented its own advantages. One of the major ones was that I had the ability to process and assess all of the various ideas and theories that were discussed in depth in this course and apply them to my ever growing " teaching philosophy. I feel that this course, more so than any of my practical based courses, has allowed me to not only grow professionally, but as an individual as well. I am a better person because of this course, and I think its impact will be extremely beneficial to my future students. Before I discuss how I plan to conduct my own culturally inclusive classroom I feel that there is an important initial step that I as a future educator, and all educators need to take.

Through all of our discussions and assigned readings I learned that there are a multitude of different variables involved in creating a cultural classroom and that it is rather easy to get sidetracked or bogged down in subject matter. However, one of the most important aspects I took away from all the <https://assignbuster.com/implementing-diversity-in-the-classroom/>

readings, and one that I am sure many of us overlook, is the need for self reflection and evaluation, especially in the area concerning our own personal prejudices and beliefs.

It is impossible to expect cultural understanding and respect from our students, if we as teachers and role models allow our own limitations are constantly undermining the process (that whole " do as I say not as I do" philosophy will not cut it in the classroom). Teachers should mediate cross-cultural adaptations and they can do this only when they come out of their own cultural shell and alter their perception of others. As an educator this key step must first occur before I can even begin to think about creating a culturally inclusive classroom experience.

Respecting and Valuing Diversity Throughout my teaching career I hope to instill in my students a sense of appreciation, understanding, and respect for different cultures and backgrounds. I want them to realize that each of them is uniquely different, yet surprisingly similar at the same time. As an educator I want everyone of my students to leave my class feeling a sense of pride for who they are and where they come from, no one should ever be ashamed of their background. However, to aid my students in this I will first need to know more about them, their parents, and their background.

When the school year began one of the first things I would have my students do would be to share a little about themselves with the rest of the class. This would be a great way for not only myself to get to know them, but their peers as well. However, it is only fair that I extend the same courtesy to them as well. I would give them a little insight into my own culture and

background, as well as some basic information. I would even allow them to ask me several questions pertaining to myself, as long as they do not cross any ethical threshold.

So as to build my understanding and knowledge about my students and their background I would give them several forms and information sheets to take home along with their syllabus. One form would be a more form with more detailed questions about themselves, their parents, their concerns, and what they feel is their learning style. The other form will actually be a letter from me to their parents highlighting who I am, my experience, what I am expecting from their child, and how they may get in contact with me.

Attached to this letter will be a form asking the parent or guardian to please set up a time to meet with me personally so we can formally meet and so they can discuss any concerns, issues, or anything else they think I should know. Creating an atmosphere of tolerance, acceptance, and caring would involve the whole class. When cultural differences cause problems it should be addressed as a group. The children need to be aware that it is okay to be different from others. By bringing the differences out in the open, it will open the minds of those students not yet exposed to cultural differences. I am a strong believer in a cooperative and open classroom, and I think students benefit from an education that they themselves are actively constructing and participating in. I think opening up a discussion on the first day of class and asking them what topics they wish to learn on top of the set curriculum would be extremely beneficial. Physical Arrangement of Classroom In terms of the overall look and arrangement of the classroom, I am not particularly

set. I believe that the room should be decorated in such a way that it reflects the various cultures of the students .

I also believe that it needs to be aesthetically pleasing. This is one of the areas where I feel the students should have some say. While as a history teacher I will need to have maps, and important historical dates and people displayed throughout the classroom, I think allowing the students to choose aspects of their own culture that they wish to have on display would not only help in presenting an open classroom, but would help expose students to different cultures. I know that most classrooms are decorated to reflect the different holidays.

However, since some of my students might not celebrate the same holidays, I would opt to set up a " holidays of the world corner. " Here several different holidays would be depicted, and I would ask to have a student explain the origin and traditions of the holiday, that way all of the class could celebrate. As far as the seating arrangement went, it would vary depending on the lesson. For lecture, media viewing, and exams I would prefer to have a traditional row set up or table setup. However, I strongly believe in group discussion, and I think it is a great way for students to think critically about what they have learned.

For these " round-houses" I would organize the desks in a circular pattern. Rosenfield, Lambert, & Black (1985) in their research state that " circles and squares indicate an open, sharing classroom. Students must face one another and cannot hide. Thus ensuring that their input will be heard" (103). However, they will be assigned seating, and when the time comes, assigned

groups. Controlling who they sit with will broaden their exposure to different cultures. Additionally, I would utilize the jigsaw cooperative learning style within my classroom.

According to Brown and Kysilka (2002) “ students need regular and positive experiences with as many types of diversity as possible. Such experiences, with the guidance of the teacher, will help them to develop the lifelong skills needed to be a proactive citizen in the global society” (p. 17). This method would allow for the greatest exchange of ideas and respect the value of diversity within our classroom. Communication is extremely important when it comes to learning, respecting and valuing cultural diversity.

I want my students to know and realize that I fully intend for their parents to be able to participate in their learning experience. Throughout the semester I will provide parents with various newsletters and emails concerning upcoming events, the child’s progress, and how they can be involved. I will also allow both parents and students to set up any individual meetings if they so wish. I also want them to realize that I do care and want to know more about them, and I want them to feel as though they have some input into how the class is ran and organized.

Powell and Caseau (2004) argue that in order for students to be successful they need to “ feel that someone cares whether or not they succeed”. Furthermore Teachers need to “ encourage all students to perform to their potential regardless of their culture” (65). However, Communication is not only what is spoken, it is also what is implied with nonverbal communication.

I need to be fully aware that different cultures view forms of nonverbal communication such as eye contact, touching, facial gestures, and hand gestures differently. Curriculum

One of the great joys of teaching history is that it allows for in-depth discussion and study of several different cultures and people throughout different period of time. Since my subject area is history and while I will be required to spend a great deal of time discussing the classical histories, such as Greece, Rome, England, and such, I would like to supplement my lesson plans with discussions on what other civilizations and cultures were experiencing at the same time, what advances were occurring, and how other cultures directly affected the birth of our own.

To allow the students to further their own understanding about different cultures and provide for multicultural study I would like to have my students research a different civilization or culture and report on what was transpiring within their community at a pre chosen time. This will allow students to understand that other cultures and civilizations were still advancing and thriving during the emergence of our own. History is all connected. I also fully intend to introduce the oral history project that I created during this course.

This will give students a first hand look at different cultures and will give them a chance to confront their own prejudices. Hopefully this assignment will aid in crumbling the stereotypes these students have concerning other groups, and will allow them to grow personally. Another key to developing a working classroom environment is to understand that a teacher needs to

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know what it is that they are trying to convey to their students (what they want to teach) and, and how they want to that (how they will teach).

Since the times and the technology are advancing teachers need to constantly “update” their lessons, how they approach the lesson, and even what they know about the material. According to Morrison (2006) becoming an educator literally means becoming “a life long learner. In theory, the what you want to teach aspect is pretty straightforward, it is the how you teach it that is a little more complicated” (143). Not every child learns the same way as everybody. I believe that I need to be conscious of this and develop lessons and activities that present the same information, just in different ways.

Instead of using the traditional lecture and note taking method, maybe I should use maps, charts, power point, video, audio, and hands on activities to ensure that each learning style is being addressed. This will ensure that none of my students are left behind. Assessment Assessment is a huge issue in today’s schools. While I agree that teachers need away to determine what level of understanding a student is at, and whether they have retained the information, I feel that there are several different ways to go about assessing.

One of the major ways is through exams. While traditional multiple choice and true/false measure retention, I feel that short answer and essay exams help determine what concepts the student actually grasps, and shows different levels of critical and abstract thinking. Thinking (Boud & Feletti, 1997). I am also a fan of oral assessment. This is where I call upon a student

in class to answer several questions pertaining to the current topic and I evaluate their response.

This does not mean that I am always looking for the right answer, or what I perceive to be the right answer. If the student can fluently present their argument and use exerts from the reading or past discussions to support their claim then it must be taken into consideration and it also proves they are fully involved and is advancing. However, I will of course have to explain to my students that the standardized tests are looking for specific answers, and that they will be expected to know the “ traditional” answers for this purpose.

Another means of assessment is derived from the culturally inclusive lesson plan I created for this course. This major project, and others like it, are great ways of determining where your students are developmentally and grade level wise. Group projects and other team assignments are also forms of assessment. It is imperative that I utilize various means of assessment to ensure that the different learning styles of my students are addressed, and to ensure that I am not putting one group of students at a greater disadvantage/advantage over another. Conclusion

While I am by no means fully prepared to or sure how to make a diversity enriched classroom environment, I do believe that I am on the right path. I know that I want my students to feel safe and secure in my classroom , and feel as though they can express who they really are. I do not want them to feel as though I do not appreciate or care about their culture, and I want them to know that they can speak openly with me with any problems or

concerns they have. Lastly, I believe that one of the most important elements of my “ working philosophy” involves simply loving what you do, and having fun while doing it.

Approach each day with excitement and energy, this will make the day more enjoyable, and provide for a more welcoming environment. Students will enjoy being in your class and that will be reflected in their work. If you come to school with that excitement it is bound to rub off on someone, and the passion you bring to your subject matter will inspire your students to find the same love for it. References Boud, David & Feletti, Grahame. (1997). *The Challenge of problem based learning* (2nd Ed.). London, England: Kogan Page limited. Brown, S.

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