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EDPC 610 – Foundations II
Assignment Five

Journal Reflection - Multiculturalism

The world in which we live today is undeniably as multicultural as ever before. In order to encourage an appreciation and understanding of these other cultures, educators must make an effort to change school culture and consequently help reduce prejudice by incorporating aspects of various cultures, ethnicities, races, social class and gender into the curriculum, teaching methods, instructional materials and teaching philosophy. In an article titled, "Teaching with a Multicultural Perspective," Rey Gomez writes that "Multicultural education embodies a perspective rather than a curriculum." Educators have the opportunity to opportunity to instill a positive attitude in students in an effort to eliminate stereotypes that can develop in children at a young age.

The development of multicultural education began in the 1960's and 1970's. Adding multicultural education into schools was an integral part of the diversity movement. Educators sought to increase tolerance by increasing awareness of the very diverse populations in our school systems. Today educators seek to change the complete social structure of our schools by incorporating the values and traditions of these cultures and varied social groups. By integrating multicultural education into the curriculum, teaching materials, and our everyday activities, educators can ensure that a quality, meaningful and relevant education is given to *all* learners.

According to Banks, young people mirror those negative racial attitudes of adults. In order to minimize the prejudice that surrounds students every day, educators must infuse the curriculum with as much diversity and multiculturalism as possible. Assistive Technology can play a major role in this infusion. Incorporating technology into all subject areas gives students exposure to a wide variety of cultures while providing hands-on, up-to-date teaching material. Teachers can incorporate different cultures into lessons involving art, music, just

about any subject. Sites like [Marco Polo](#) give teachers instant access to a variety of multicultural lesson plans. Another resource available for school is the [Multicultural Pavilion](#). It gives teachers access to a multitude of awareness activities, ideas on curriculum reform, trainings and workshops and free handouts. Some activities may include teaching a lesson such as this web project found on Marco Polo about the Southern Poverty Law Center, hosted by Tolerance.org that encourages people from all walks of life to "fight hate and promote tolerance." Also, teachers can even take a quiz to assess their knowledge of Education Equity and Social Justice Awareness at <http://edchange.org/multicultural/quiz/quiz.html>. All of these resources allow teachers to be more informed about the students in their classes while incorporate their cultures and other cultures into the curriculum.

Salend states that understanding individual differences allows teachers to focus on a student's individual strengths, needs and specific experiences. Each student brings their own personal knowledge to the classroom. This is why multicultural education is so crucial to a quality education and is so essential for each student. Learning becomes more meaningful when students become part of the learning process. Not only will this awareness enable students to develop skills that are key when learning how to analyze and think critically, but the awareness will allow students to learn to develop the skills needed to view and examine topics from a wide range of perspectives. Being able to view issues from different perspectives will allow each student to have a greater understanding of each other while learning to really empathize with each individual point of view.

In order for student to develop a greater understanding of these various cultures, races, ethnicities and social groups, educator must re-think the way that they teach. While not always easy, this content must be integrated throughout the curriculum in order to make the biggest impact. Major changes need to be made across the board and not just in what we teach but in what we use to teach it...and how we teach it. Adjustments must be made in learning standards, curriculum materials including textbooks, as well as teaching methods. According

to Salend, "multicultural curriculum acknowledges the voice, histories, experiences and contributions of all ethnic and cultural groups." The goal as a multicultural educator would be to have students understand their own culture to its fullest extent, as well as that of other cultures by approaching education with a new attitude that includes diversity in all aspects of their classroom. This understanding will create a new positive outlook and attitude of students toward new and different cultures and ethnic groups. The only way to accomplish this goal is to modify teaching pedagogy. A great way to do this is by varying teaching methods include the use of cooperative learning groups where each student has equal responsibility. By splitting up the responsibility so that each student has the opportunity to try a different role. Another way to facilitate multicultural learning is to use examples and student's own personal experiences in all subject areas.

While using these new teaching techniques, it is important to keep in mind the special needs of students with from different cultures, mainly linguistic challenges. According to an article by Lynn Olson published in Education Week, "only one in five public school teachers said they felt prepared to address the needs of students with limited English proficiency or from diverse cultural backgrounds." The article titled, "Minority Groups to Emerge as a Majority in US Schools" states that the majority of states with major diversity challenges will remain the same. However, almost all states will see an increase in the enrollment of minorities in their school districts. This brings up the question - Are schools prepared for this influx of students? Whatever the answer may be, schools need to be prepared. Individual schools can prepare for these students by surveying their surrounding area's demographics and having a general awareness of the community at large.

As we reform the school culture to include multicultural education, it is important to remember to restructure our teaching philosophy as well. This restructuring must start from the top down. School administration must support this idea, provide teacher training, as well as, make the necessary changes to the curriculum and teaching materials. Banks states that "multicultural education is a way

of view reality and a way of thinking and not just about various ethnic and cultural groups." In a perfect world all students are created equal. Our objective in promoting educational equality is to bring knowledge of other cultures, races, genders, ethnicities, and social classes so that each child receives the best education possible. Multicultural Education is, "much more than content integration" (Banks.) It is a way for students to "improve their ability to make reflective personal and public decisions and actions that contribute to changing society and culture."

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