

Gillian Kutches
TE 891, Section 730
May 24, 2010
Brief 1: Week 2

A New Look on Diversity

This week's readings informed my thinking about multicultural education by giving me specific ideas to take to my classroom. I was reminded that it is important for me to "examine my own cultural perspective" (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p. 91). I never put myself into the equation, I only thought about my students and how it affects them. My influence on my students is considerable and before teaching about diversity, I need to organize my thoughts and reflect on not only what I believe, but how I can facilitate a positive experience for my students. Kristy Garcia encourages teachers, "Think about their own approaches to and beliefs about diversity, to seriously examine how these beliefs may affect their students' sense of empowerment, and to think about how they can modify or alter these beliefs for the benefit of their students" (Garcia, 2002, p. 22).

I teach in a classroom full of children from all around the world. I know how crucial it is to teach students about diversity, but I felt overwhelmed, not knowing where to start. In my classroom, I have seen name calling and other stereotyping occur. I would deal with each issue individually, talking to the students involved and explaining about why these comments are wrong. I failed to see the big picture; all students need to be taught about differences. It is my job to empower students, not ignore this issue. Also, teaching first grade, I feel it is my responsibility to teach my young students about these relationships now, so these positive teachings can hopefully follow them throughout their schooling. I need to teach students about differences and what they mean (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p.

100). Children are curious, and it is important to answer questions about diversity honestly. I realize I ignored many of the questions I heard, rather than openly discuss it in a safe and friendly way.

I need to ensure each and every child in my classroom has the opportunity to succeed and feel a positive self worth. I want to encourage their self-esteem to blossom, and I will try to find ways to promote individual successes, and celebrate them. One way I can encourage students to see beyond their differences and discover common ground is cooperative grouping. Jennifer Steele explains, “Once we discover a common ground, the differences that blanket it will make our shared ideas stronger” (2002, p. 21). Next year, I want students to do more talking with each other. I feel these conversations are important, and I want kids to see their similarities. I will focus on more group tasks where students each have a job and have to work together to achieve a common goal. “Cooperative learning in classrooms is a successful strategy for reducing stereotyping and social rejection across disability, race and gender lines” (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p. 107). Teaching culturally diverse students is a challenge. Rather than ignore our differences, I want to provide a safe and welcoming environment where students feel successful, special and encouraged to be who they are.

References

- Garcia, K. (2002). "Swimming against the mainstream: Examining cultural assumptions in the classroom." In L. Darling-Hammond, J. French, & S. Garcia-Lopez (eds.). *Learning to teach for social justice* (pp. 22-29). New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. A. (eds). (2009). *Making choices for multicultural education: Five approaches to race, class, and gender, sixth edition*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Steele, J. (2002). Acknowledging diversity in the classroom. In L. Darling-Hammond, J. French, & S. Garcia-Lopez (eds.). *Learning to teach for social justice* (pp. 18-21). New York: Teachers College Press.