

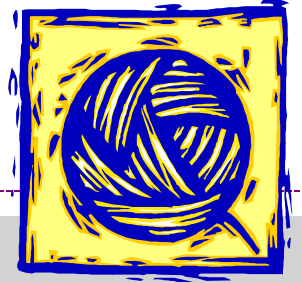
# Multicultural Education in Today's Schools



GILLIAN KUTCHES



# Let's get to know each other...

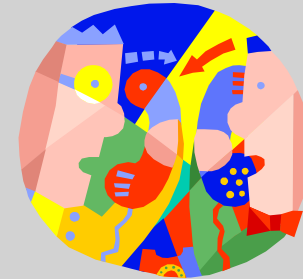


- **Activity:**
  - Find out who has a birthday closest to today's date. That person will start.
  - Take the ball of yarn in the center of your table.
  - State one unique fact about your background or how you grew up
  - Holding onto the end of the yarn, throw the ball to another person at your table.
  - That person will state a unique fact about their culture/background
  - Holding onto the end, that person will throw the ball to someone else, and so on until everyone has spoken
  - At the end, you should all be connected by the yarn, creating a web
- **Discuss.** How can this activity be used in the classroom?  
What does it symbolize for our students' cultures?

# “I already use the Multicultural Education approach!”



- Most educators claim to know and understand what Multicultural Education is, but few really use it in their classrooms
  - Activity: Discuss with a neighbor why you think this is.
- Let’s learn about Multicultural education and how to make it meaningful for our students and classrooms...



# What is Multicultural Education?



- “Multicultural Education is a popular term used by educators to describe education policies and practices that recognize, accept and affirm human differences and similarities related to gender, race, disability, class and sexuality” (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p. 161)
- It’s goal is to prepare students to be active members in a diverse society
- It wants to promote social change

# Three Strands of Transformation



- 1. The transformation of self
- 2. The transformation of schools and schooling
- 3. The transformation of society



# Gollnick (1980) describes 5 goals of Multicultural Education:



- 1. Promoting the strength and value of cultural diversity
- 2. Promoting human rights and respect for those who are different from oneself
- 3. Promoting alternative life choices for people
- 4. Promoting social justice and equal opportunity for all people
- 5. Promoting equity in the distribution of power among groups

# Let's Think About This...



- Advocates of Multicultural Education ask, “Given the real diversity that exists in U.S. society, how can we learn to support and respect that diversity rather than suppress and deny it?” (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p.166)
- Activity: Turn and talk to someone around you about how you think you can do this in your classroom



# Societal Goals



- Promote cultural pluralism
  - Cultural pluralism involves balancing diverse cultures and identities within one nation (Sleeter & Grant)
  - Each citizen's knowledge is important and can help our country
  - Everyone should learn how to disagree positively with people different from them
- The United States is compared to a “tossed salad”, in that, “Each ingredient is dependent on the others, but each is still unique; together the ingredients form a collective total that is distinguished by its diversity” (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p.164)





## School Goals



- Equal Opportunity for all
  - With Multicultural Education, no students would feel unwelcome because of the way they look, their religion or sexual orientation
- “Classrooms would enable all students to choose and strive for a personally fulfilling future, and develop self respect, in a way that builds on their home culture or language.” (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p.167)
- One size DOESN’T fit all!

# How do we take differences into account?



- “Offering equal opportunity does not necessarily mean offering identical opportunities with the school, since students’ backgrounds and experiences differ” (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p.168)
  - This means we need to think about our students’ differences critically
- If our children see White male citizens as the most important, we have not achieved equal opportunity



# Two negative mentalities



## "Business as usual"

- “Business as usual” teaches students’ that their home culture or religion is inferior or un-American
  - It can alienate students from their home culture
  - It can cause students to reject school

## Assimilationist school policies

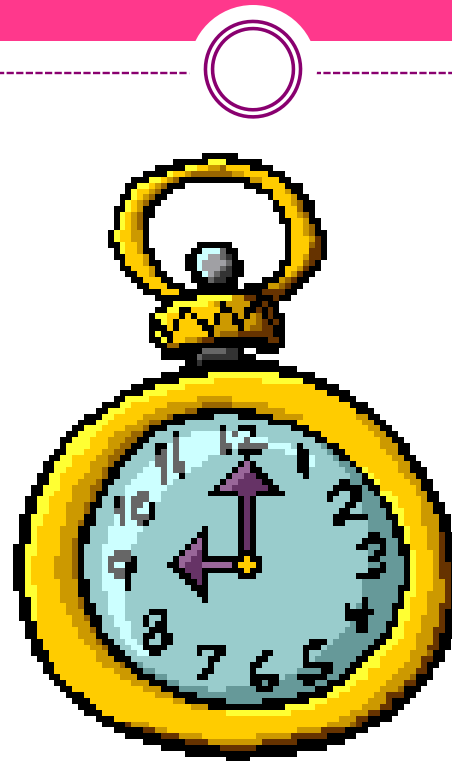
- Assimilationist school policies are harmful
  - They reinforce the mistaken idea in the majority-group children that their home culture is the only true American culture and that everyone else wants to be just like them (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p.170)

# Think about these questions...



- How do I know where my students come from?
- Do my lesson or unit topics represent only one cultural group?
- What do I say about culture?
- How does my classroom transmit culture?
- What do I tell my students unconsciously?
- Does my classroom promote learning from each other? Do I have multiple opportunities for cooperative learning?

Please take a 15 minute break.



# What Can We Do as Educators?



- Cultural diversity needs to be taught to all Americans
- Students should be taught that there is no single “American culture”
- Students need to be exposed to literary works by diverse authors
- Students need to learn different and diverse perspectives
- Schools need to teach both sexes knowledge that tends to be only learned by one sex



# Get to know your students!



- Children are molded by their environments
- Ask students:
  - What communities do you participate in?
    - ✦ What are they learning in those communities that can be built upon in the classroom?
  - What language do you speak?
- You have to know where your students come from to be able to determine where they need to go

# Our Curriculum



- Should present diverse perspectives and experiences
- Groups should be depicted as active and dynamic
- Teachers need to...
  - Learn about various groups
  - Examine content standards and use them reflectively
    - ✦ How can I rework a standard that promotes “business as usual”?
  - Be sure not to oversimplify information
    - ✦ This can lead to stereotyping
  - Help students see a common ground between different people
    - ✦ How can you respect a group of people you know nothing about?





## Our Instruction



- Should emphasize student's contributions and strengths rather than their disabilities (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p.179)
- Should connect to students' lives outside of school
- Should help students develop positive academic self-concepts
  - “Because students with a negative self-image are not fully able to learn, school becomes an arena for failure that prevents them from achieving the success needed for high self esteem” (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p.180)

# Our Assessments



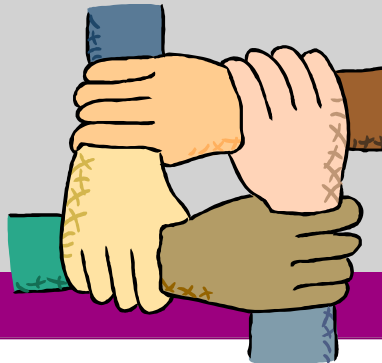
- Students who are fluent in a language other than English need to be assessed in that language
- Ensure tests do not advantage one gender more than the other
- Ensure that assessments test on information the students have actually been taught
- Use performance assessments over standardized tests



# Cooperative Learning...One Great Strategy



- “Cooperative learning that involves students and teachers working together generally produces the richest learning environment” (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p.179)
- Students from different cultures and backgrounds work together to achieve a common goal
- Team building can help students to see their similarities, rather than their differences



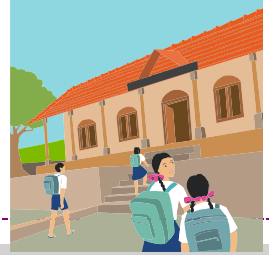
# One Elementary “Get to know you” Activity to Try...



- First day of school activity
- Materials:
  - Book: *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein
  - Big Buttons with a letter of the alphabet written on it, or Hershey's miniature candies.
- Plan:
  - The first activity is called, "I'll get to know you." The teacher (ahead of time) tapes either a big button with a letter of the alphabet, or a piece of candy underneath the child's desk. The teacher would make sure that there are 2 of each letter and then space out the letters.
  - Example, under Johnny's desk a button would have the letter "A" written on it, and then across the room, under Brenda's desk, there would be another button with the letter "A". (Older grades should use two of the same kind of candy).
  - When the teacher rings the bell, the children scurry to find their match and then must find out 2 facts about the person.
  - After everyone has found their match, the children would sit in a big circle to introduce their new friend and tell the class two facts about the person.
  - As a closing activity, I read the book *The Giving Tree*, by Shel Silverstein. I open up a discussion about what it means to "give" and to give things that you cannot buy.
  - Ask the children to go back to their desks and write a letter to their classmates telling what they plan to give to the classroom. For younger grades, simply have them draw a picture.
- Source: <http://atozteacherstuff.com/pages/307.shtml>



# Home and School Relationships



- There should be a strong relationship; teachers need to get to know their families
- Teachers should design activities that can involve families
- Conferences:
  - The purpose should be explained to students (“We are meeting to talk about all the great things you have learned this year, and how you can learn even more”)
  - Teachers should not do all of the talking
  - Remember, “Homes are as varied and diverse as the people who make up a multicultural community” (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p.183)

# The critiques on Multicultural Education



- The worst way to deal with differences is to put them in the spotlight
- It is unrealistic to think mainstream culture will be pluristic
- Multicultural materials focus on white women and African Americans, but not other cultures
- Studying multiple forms of diversity is too much
- It does not pay attention to social classes
- Teachers rarely put in the time and effort to teach Multicultural education well



# Let's Reflect...



- Activity: Turn and talk with a neighbor about three things you will do in your classroom to promote Multicultural Education
  - Write these ideas down on your hand-out so you don't forget them!

# Thank You!



**ENJOY THE REST OF THE CONFERENCE!**

**GILLIAN KUTCHES**