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Reflection #1
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Growing up, I lived in a fairly mixed community and learned at an early age that people of our society come from many different places. As I entered school, mainly high school, while I was quite familiar with the different students that filled our classrooms, I wasn't exactly educated on their cultural differences and what it was about each culture that made it unique. While my parents taught me to accept everyone, especially those who looked different from me, it wasn't a priority in our household to learn the significances of our differences. It wasn't until college, more specifically Graduate school, that I became educated on cultural differences and learned the many different importance's of bringing diversity into our world. While I am not currently teaching, I am a substitute at a school that has a somewhat diverse community. Of the 4,683 students, 70% are White, 17% are Hispanic or Latino, 10% are Black or African American, 2% are Asian or Native Hawaiian, and 1% are multiracial (New York State Education Department (NYSED)). Since this is the only school I have definitively taught in it is the only school I can use to base my experience with diversity in the classroom.

Diversity is a distinct part of our country that is continually growing each and every day. Unfortunately, in today's society, it is something that many people ignore or look down upon because of their biased views. When it comes to United States schools, racial and ethnic groups are a persistent debate and included in those debates are the negative aspects of the achievement gaps between different cultural groups around the world. "The achievement gap may be particularly pronounced for Mexican-Americans who constitute the vast majority of U.S. Latinos and are among the most educationally at risk of all Latino subgroups" (Ream, 2003, p. 237).

I think that no matter what the demographic percentages are in our schools, we as teachers need to create a cross-cultural curriculum that every student can adapt to easily. Ream (2003) states in his article that there are many reasons as to why there is such an achievement gap in the education for Mexican-Americans, one being that many students of Mexican-American descent attend schools where “their teachers having little knowledge of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds” which in turn leads to a separation between the students and the school (Ream, 2003, p. 238). I definitely agree with what Ream, in that we as teachers can be very influential on the success of our students. As teachers, we need to go out of our way to get to know all of our students and incorporate different multicultural views into our classroom and teach strategies that can be culturally responsive and help students to want to learn about the diverse backgrounds of their country. When it comes to teaching these diversified students, I definitely feel that our expectations need to be the same for all of our students. For me in particular, I know I don’t intentionally lower my expectations for a student of a different ethnicity than myself. No student should ever be expected less of because of their cultural background. In a classroom, high expectations are one of the many keys to success. In order to have successful students, you must expect great things from them.

Along with the idea of teachers having an influence on student achievement, there are also other factors that affect the success of our students in schools. According to Ream, mobility is also a hurdle that stands in the way of Mexican-American achievement (Ream, 2003). It is a significant factor that is contributing to Mexican-American underachievement (Ream, 2003). I definitely would have to agree with Ream and say that school mobility is something that influences student success in the classroom. I know for myself, if I was a student who was moved around to different schools as a kid I would struggle with not only the classes but with the

idea of attending new schools pretty frequently. It has to be very difficult for students who are being forced to change schools. Every time a student's gets to a new school, they are automatically deemed the "new student" and have to start all over in not only their classes but the process of finding new friends. I believe that it is very difficult to be successful in an environment that is constantly changing.

I personally believe in order for teachers to make for a successful and cultural classroom, they need to become sensitive to diversity and work on adapting to a multicultural environment. It is necessary teachers explore their cultural surroundings through classroom materials and as a teacher, I think I will try to incorporate diversity into my classroom through different lessons and projects, while staying in close contact with parents of my students to find out some more about the different ethnicities around me. With the situation of school mobility, while I don't think I can do anything about lowering that statistic, I will be sure to make all students feel comfortable especially students who may be new to the school. The last thing I want is for a student to not be successful because they are new to my classroom.

Resources

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