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Teaching Respect, Inclusion, and Acceptance in Ethnically and Culturally Diverse Early Childhood Classrooms

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University of San Francisco

**Teaching Respect, Inclusion, and Acceptance in Ethnically and
Culturally Diverse Early Childhood Classrooms**

A Field Project Presented to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in International and Multicultural Education

by
Romina S. Sapinoso
December 2014

Teaching Respect, Inclusion, and Acceptance in Ethnically and Culturally Diverse Early Childhood Classrooms

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF ARTS

in

INTERNATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

by Romina S. Sapinoso
December 2014

UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Under the guidance and approval of the committee, and approval by all the members, this field project has been accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree.

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Date

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

I came back to my transitional kindergarten class of four and five year olds after a day off and immediately received word from the substitute teacher. There was an “incident” the day before involving two of my students. An African-American student apparently had pulled the *patka* or head covering of a Sikh student. I personally did not know the implications of what had happened due to my own lack of knowledge of what the *patka* meant to the Sikh community. Thankfully, it was not very serious but still enough to raise concerns for the Sikh family. After separate conferences with very gracious parents of both students, I welcomed the opportunity to talk to my class about what the Sikh religion is and why this particular classmate wore a *patka* to school or anywhere he goes. The parents of my Sikh student were very helpful in providing resources to facilitate the discussion. The children were genuinely interested in the presentation and even asked a few questions. It was a great opportunity for both my students and I to learn about a classmate’s culture and beliefs.

This particular event made me reflect on the diversity that is present in my small community of learners. I felt very excited to be in this diverse setting as a teacher. However, when instances such as this happen, I increasingly felt I was lacking in knowledge and proactivity in integrating ethnic and cultural diversity into our curriculum and daily school life. Despite many years of teaching, I felt I was not doing more to affirm and acknowledge the rich background and cultural identity that my students bring with them to class. At the same time, I became more aware of the importance of cultivating an attitude of respect and acceptance in my students towards each other. I

became more convinced that teachers who are interested in teaching inclusion, respect, and acceptance should have access to a resource guide that can help them celebrate the diversity in their classrooms.

The occurrence between my students and their parents was resolved without much trouble. In many parts of the world, the same peaceful negotiations and harmonious living do not happen as smoothly. Conflict and oppression that have existed between ethnic, cultural, or religious groups have been documented throughout history – these include conflict between Muslims and Christians, Israelis and Palestinians, and Indians and Pakistanis, just to name a few. The list also includes warring groups within same countries. The world has witnessed how genocide has been committed between the Hutus and Tutsis in Rwanda, the Tamil and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, and more recently, the Seleka and anti-Balaka in the Central African Republic. An unchecked level of intolerance, lack of acceptance or even indifference between groups is not only unpleasant locally but also catastrophic on the global scale (UNESCO, 1994). Many other conflicts have been recorded throughout history, each marred by violence and the loss of many lives. In the aftermath of these conflicts and in the face of devastation and loss, we are left with deep wounds, which take generations to heal. These times raise the question: what could we have done to prevent these tragedies?

During my own reflection, I realized that teaching young children in an ethnically and culturally diverse setting is not only a uniquely rich experience but also an opportunity to try something new. I often observe my students and notice that my Spanish speakers tend to play together at recess. The same goes for my Asian Indian students, many of whom have just recently immigrated from India. Language may be a

factor as to why these students, as young as they are, tend to congregate with those that they perceive as more similar to them. I do observe families of different ethnicities interacting with each other while waiting for their students outside and this is very hopeful to see.

However, even in the very progressive San Francisco Bay Area where diversity abounds, there may still be a reluctance to engage in conversations about what is unique in different ethnic groups such as our varying culture and ways of life. I wonder if, in turn, we miss out on the more important conversation about what is the same. People are conscious about politeness and political correctness, which is not a negative thing. On the other hand, can this also prohibit us from engaging each other in dialogues that could give us a better understanding of other cultures and traditions? What if, at a young age, we could promote in children the acceptance, understanding and encouragement to look at differences and then past them by actually talking about them more openly? Can this pave the way for an opportunity to better connect with each other? Is it possible to give children mechanisms to inquire and dialogue instead of simply telling them not to ask impolite questions or stare at somebody who looks different? What if we could give them the tools and the safe space to notice each other and allow an expression and celebration of the things that are different and makes each person unique? Can we strengthen relationships between different people and communities through a purposeful curriculum by which children are given the opportunity to get to know one another's cultures?

I work in a highly diverse public school in Fremont, California and the ethnic and cultural diversity in the school I work in is not an isolated phenomenon. The U.S. has become more and more ethnically and racially diverse over the years and can be

described as being “on the cusp of a profound transformation in terms of its demographic composition” (Durand, 2010, p. 838). Suarez-Orozco notes (as cited in Durand, 2010) the first and last decades of the 20th century as eras of large-scale immigration. The San Francisco Bay Area has also experienced this same shift in its demographics. Hendricks (2005) describes the diversity in this area as “eclipsed only by that in the metropolitan regions of Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, and Chicago.” The U.S. census reports that there is a total of 112 languages spoken in the Bay Area making it the fifth most linguistically varied metropolitan area in the nation (Hendricks, 2005).

With the richness of diversity comes the inclination of many people to form ethnic enclaves and stick with community members who are of the same ethnic and racial identity – a practice that seems to have been done since the earliest immigrant groups arrived in this country. Because of this, we have numerous ethnic communities like Chinatown and Little Italy in New York and another Chinatown and Japan town in San Francisco. Borjas (as cited in Bauer, Epstein, & Gang, 2002) indicate that income and human capital affect the extent of ethnic segregation. However, language is also a big factor for the existence of ethnic enclaves. Latinos, particularly those who lack English proficiency, prefer to live in neighborhoods with a strong Latino presence in order to enjoy a wide array of ethnic goods, services, and institutions (Yang Liu, 2009). In fact, though there is great pride in the diversity of parts of the country such as the San Francisco Bay Area as well as a good deal of integration, divisions along racial and ethnic lines are still evident within neighborhoods and cities if one takes a closer look (Schwarz, 2013.) Along with pride and celebration of diversity comes the challenge of going beyond differences and reaching out between ethnic groups and neighborhoods.

The question may arise as to why we need to teach children about diversity as early as their first years in school. Cultural diversity is often at the center of early childhood education and is ostensibly grounded in social justice and equality (Ang, 2010). Studies have indicated that the early years of childhood are significant to the formation of one's self-perception and the perception of others. Ramsey (as cited in Ponciano & Shabazian, 2012) states children are able to correctly discern racial differences and use gender labels as early as toddlerhood. While they are still struggling to figure out the meanings of these constructs, preschool children begin constructing their own identities by looking at their similarities and differences with others (Cross as cited in Ponciano & Shabazian, 2012). Preschoolers are also able to ask questions about their own and others' racial, linguistic and gender attributes (Ramsey as cited in Ponciano & Shabazian, 2012) and are cognizant of family structure and socio-economic differences and the value that society attaches to them (Tatum as cited in Ponciano & Shabazian, 2012).

Children, during their early childhood years, are forming ideas and concepts about themselves and others and it is very important that these ideas be grounded in the principle of respect, inclusion and acceptance. Early childhood educators are crucial in laying the foundation for students and giving them the necessary tools to live together respectfully and reject any form of prejudice. However, there is no concrete tool or resource for early childhood educators in demographically diverse schools, which enables teachers to engage students about culture and model how to facilitate opportunities for student sharing of their cultural backgrounds.

In response to the growing diversity in the U.S., many school districts are making concerted efforts to help non English speaking students be able to adapt to the country's system of education through different teacher and student support programs. For example, in the state of California, students who are learning English are provided with English Language Development (ELD) classes ("Facts about English Learners in California - CalEdFacts," 2013). Each school district has a set of programs that are used to target specific student groups based on their English language proficiency with the goal of closing the gap between these students and their English-speaking counterparts ("Facts about English Learners in California - CalEdFacts," 2013).

However, beyond academic support, a question arises on how these students are being supported as they grow up negotiating their ethnic identities, cultures, and background. How are teachers and students able to talk about differences between themselves and their peers in the context of American culture? Given the multi-ethnicity and cultural diversity in U.S. classrooms, what resources are available to support and guide educators in the teaching of inclusion and respect in their small communities- the classrooms? At the same time, what can help them teach in a manner that supports and affirms their students' individual backgrounds? Are spaces being created to bring conversations about ethnic and cultural diversity to the foreground so children at an early stage are able to make sense and meaning of the rich and exciting variety of life that is around them? Given the natural curiosity and inclination of children, is the understanding and openness to the diversity around them assumed to just be part of their experience or do we miss out on directing our youngest citizens towards a path of harmonious inter-

cultural and inter-ethnic relationships by leaving this great opportunity to chance and assuming they will “get it” because they will grow up with it?

Early childhood professionals are increasingly faced with the challenge of supporting children and families from a diverse cultural milieu and the goal of supporting them is complex and difficult as many of the teachers, a majority of them being Euro-American white, are of a different cultural and ethnic background from the students in their classrooms (Durand, 2010). Durand (2010) further expounds by stating,

In the context of an increasingly globalised world, the issue of providing early care and education to children and families from diverse cultural backgrounds in ways that are meaningful and supportive is profoundly important for the development of individual children, the sustenance of future generations and nations, and the interconnectedness of the world. (Durand, 2010, p. 838)

Therefore, given the increasingly diverse demographics of American public schools, it is necessary for teachers who are interested in exposing their students to concepts of inclusion, respect, and acceptance to have access to a resource guide and model for implementing a curriculum that is culturally and ethnically inclusive.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project is to develop a resource guide for teachers of early childhood education in elementary schools for the teaching of inclusion, respect, and acceptance in diverse classroom settings. This resource will be useful for teachers in grades Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, first and second in their efforts to create a safe space to celebrate students’ differences and increase their knowledge and understanding about each other’s cultures and traditions. The project contains suggestions and ideas for creating classroom environments as well as activities that provide for the discussion and sharing about ethnic and cultural diversity among students and their

families. The activities and models for the lessons will be most suitable to adapt for Social Studies in the curriculum but will have room for application in reading and literacy.

Theoretical Framework

There are three frameworks within which I sought to address the issue at hand and referred to as a guide for the creation of this project– multiculturalism, interculturalism, and community cultural wealth. Multiculturalism focuses on the creation of equal educational opportunities and positive attitudes towards differences (Banks & Banks as cited in Ponciano & Shabazian, 2012). It is characterized by a focus on “changing curriculum and instruction to make them more reflective of and responsive to the racial, ethnic, cultural, social and linguistic diversity that exists in the United States” (Gay as cited in Gallagher & Pritchard, 2007, p. 538). Using the framework of multiculturalism to introduce young children to the variety of stories, traditions, languages and appearance of people around them could deeply influence and shape the way they view differences, hopefully towards a positive direction.

Interculturalism is a bidirectional sharing and learning across cultures to promote understanding, equality, harmony, and justice in a diverse society. It deepens the first framework as it diverts from the top to bottom perspectives and proposes instead, a bilateral sharing where there is “an authentic and meaningful exchange of information about each person’s individual experiences that transform all involved” (Ponciano & Shabazian, 2012, p. 23). It is clearly important to expose children to differences between themselves and others in terms of ethnicity and culture but it is not enough to compare and contrast with one another. The issue is beyond this simple view and towards a

valuing of the differences within as well as between different cultural groups (Durand, 2010).

When children from minority cultures enter into the classroom, teachers are inclined to see disadvantage – *Can the child speak English? How will this child survive in the classroom if he/she can't communicate? It will take a bit of time before he/she can catch up.* Deficit thinking focuses on the unconscious belief that minority students will not do well because they enter school without the normative cultural knowledge skills and assumes that the parents neither value nor support the child's education (Yosso, 2005). Through the lens of Critical Race Theory, culture is seen as a source of empowerment and can form or draw from communal funds of knowledge (Yosso, 2005). Yosso (2005) outlines six components of cultural wealth capital: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capitals. Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future even in the face of real and perceived barriers. Linguistic capital is focused on the intellectual and social skills attained brought about by communication experiences in more than one language. Familial capital refers to the cultural knowledge nurtured among and within families that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition. Social capital is understood as networks of people and community resources. Navigational capital represents the skills of maneuvering through social institutions while resistant capital refers to the skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality. Within this cultural wealth capital framework, this field project will mostly draw on the components of familial, linguistic and social capital.

The combination of these three frameworks – multiculturalism, interculturalism and cultural wealth capital, guided the creation of the components of the project and determined the kinds of tools and resources that were included in it.

Significance of the Project

The project aims to support early childhood education teachers specifically in highly diverse U.S. public schools. Its purpose is to help teachers create a space in the classroom where diversity in cultural and ethnic differences can become a tool to enrich students' school experiences. In the process, the project hopes to benefit children by celebrating and affirming each child's unique cultural and ethnic identity within a community of other learners that may or may not share his/her background. At the same time, the project is aimed at helping children appreciate each unique person in their class and what they bring to their small yet very diverse community of learners. It is my hope that the project will give children a start in developing or continuing to learn the tools and skills that their parents have already taught them in increasing their knowledge about their own and others' culture and reaching out across cultures. The project can also help teachers evaluate and employ practices that promote cultural understanding between themselves and the children they teach. I aspire that the project will contribute to raising teachers' consciousness about culturally sensitive classroom practices that affirm their students and allow the teachers to shift away from a deficit view of children from a minority background.

I anticipate that this project will make families of children from minority cultures and ethnicities feel more welcomed, valued, and involved in the school. I am hoping that it serves as a reference for parents who are curious about how the cultural environment in

the classroom is being facilitated. It will also hopefully provide a source of ideas on how parents can talk to their children about their particular ethnic traditions and cultural values as different but also shared with others. By providing a positive school experience, it is possible that this project can contribute to helping parents raise their children in a way that reinforces their own roots and traditions instead of distancing from them and also encourage them to venture out and share others' cultural experiences. At some level, I hope that parents and teachers could collaborate more to enhance the cultural environment in the classroom with the use of this resource guide.

Definition of Terms

1. **Diversity:** difference in individuals' races, ethnic backgrounds or nationalities (Durand, 2010).
2. **Culture:** a set of beliefs, traditions, activities and practices that might be shared by members of a particular community (Rogoff as cited in Durand, 2010).
3. **Early Childhood:** for the purposes of this project, this will be grades Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, First and Second.
4. **Curriculum:** a set of lessons to be implemented in the classroom setting that contains resources for teachers to supplement the curriculum.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

Is it possible to create an atmosphere where openness, dialogue and genuine interest in other people and the sum of their experiences are a given? Can we teach our children to have an attitude of welcome and respect for people who look different than they do, eat different food, speak a language they may not understand? This chapter looks at literature that discusses the dual potential of education: as a tool for the promotion of the above-mentioned positive relationships, or as a form of indoctrination of the opposite, fostering an antagonistic, objectified and sometimes dehumanized view of members of another group, community, or nation. It also discusses literature that highlights the need for an inclusive education in the U.S., the challenges to implementing it, and why early childhood education is an important component for the promotion of inclusivity and respect in a diverse classroom setting.

Tolerance, according to Bryan and Vavrus (2005, p. 185) is defined as, “respect for different identities, values and lifestyles, along racial-ethnic, religious, class, gender, sexuality and ability lines. Conversely, intolerance may be defined as the denigration of difference according to any of these dimensions or a combination of them.” These authors further elaborated on these definitions by associating intolerance with the assumption of superiority of one’s own social or cultural group above another which significantly influences how the other is viewed and behaved towards (Bryan & Vavrus, 2005). While the United Nations (UN) hopes that education around the world be used as a means for the promotion of tolerance and peace building (Novelli & Smith, 2011), Bryan and Vavrus (2005) problematize the assertion that this is indeed the case. They

assert an alternative viewpoint to education as panacea and contend that different features of schooling in terms of curricula as well as social-organizational processes (such as admissions, tracking policies, and modes of assessment for example) may contribute to producing intolerance towards certain groups (Bryan & Vavrus, 2005). In short, education is value neutral and can be used to achieve both positive and negative ends.

Educating To Hate Or To Love

There have been many documented studies of cases all over the world wherein education was used as a tool to achieve hate or antagonism between nations or groups. According to Boutte (2008, p. 165), “in educational settings, *love* connotes that all humans deserve the right to dignity, freedom, and equal opportunities. On the other hand, *hate* in educational settings is defined as a lack of compassion and lack of respect for the rights of others.” The manner in which textbooks are written and utilized is one very specific area of education that has been manipulated in ways that were divisive. For example, textbooks have been used to indoctrinate students with a certain attitude towards specific nations or groups of people or to promote a particular version of history. They have also been used to set up a foundation for the definition of national identity such as in the case of India and Pakistan.

In India and Pakistan, the formal education process has played a major role in the formation of a national identity and the determination of the government of “who belongs” (Lall, 2008). Researchers on Pakistani and Indian textbooks looked at particular time periods in the history of the two countries for comparison and to highlight how education has been used to achieve a particular political agenda. Their results turned out to reflect a very anti-Indian definition of national identity for the Pakistanis, and a very

anti-Pakistani view for Indians (Lall, 2008). Lall's (2008) article also argued that while education could be used to foster better relations between the two nations, it could also do the reverse – radicalize the school-aged youth of both groups against each other.

Education through the use of textbooks and curriculum content was the cementing device used by both governments for state-defined identities (Apple as cited in Lall, 2008).

Bryan and Vavrus (2005, p.185) talk about identity formation in whatever form (such as gender, race, etc.) as being a “relational process in which individuals and groups define themselves in opposition to others.” In the case of India and Pakistan, religion – either Hinduism or Islam – was an identity selected by both the Indian and Pakistani governments, to define the nation self in opposition to the other.

In another example along these lines, Japanese and Korean textbook accounts on the history of the Second World War are still being debated until now. Suh and Yurita (in Nakou & Barca, 2010) maintain that nationalistic framings of the second world war included in textbooks used in high schools in both Korea (a victim in the war) and Japan (the aggressor) take away from creating a place for disciplinary process and inquiry of history. As such, the authors of the study came to the conclusion that both Japan and Korea are teaching a one-sided version of history instead of teaching their students to critically think about the events that have happened in the past between the two countries.

Seeing the Other

Using education as a tool to develop antagonistic views towards other groups or nations has unfortunately resulted in large-scale discrimination, wars, and even genocide. When this happens, we can say that “Othering” has occurred. This definition of the self in opposition to the other or the “Othering” process can deepen into an objectification and

dehumanization of those who are deemed different and therefore can be morally excluded (Bryan & Vavrus, 2005). “Moral exclusion” is a concept which denotes individuals and groups being labeled as outside of the moral boundaries within which equity and justice apply and who are therefore expendable in society (Bryan & Vavrus, 2005). The Holocaust is a painful reminder of how moral exclusion takes place on a large scale. We don’t need to look further than in this country’s own history. In the United States, slavery and segregation based on race are major historical landmarks that illustrate this “Othering” process. In an interesting quote that Boutte (2008) got from the National Geographic, she writes,

...approximately 5,000 people—mostly African American men—were lynched in the United States between 1882 and 1968 (Walker 2003). Additionally, the number of hate groups continues to escalate each year, and there were 844 hate groups in the United States in 2006 (Southern Poverty Law Center 2007). Children from families who teach hate attend our schools. In many cases, teachers may be the only people who have a realistic chance of countering such indoctrination by presenting other perspectives. (Boutte, 2008, p. 169)

Different forms of racism, the treatment of Japanese-Americans during World War II, the abuse towards and displacement of Native Americans, and in more recent history, the denial of civil rights accorded to everyone else from members of the LGBTQ community, are all examples of moral exclusion in varying degrees.

Education As A Tool Against Othering

Despite this bleak picture of humanity engaging in the process of “othering” perpetuated through formal education, there have been many instances and cases when education has been used to achieve the opposite of exclusion, or love as Boutte (2008) put it. In Ireland, Protestants and Catholics are seeking to change a history of violence between the two religious groups through the promotion of integrated schools. In a

country that has always maintained the strict enrolment of only one group (either Protestant or Catholic), integrated schools in which classes are made up of students from both religious backgrounds are showing promise of “impacting positively on identity, out-group attitudes, and forgiveness and reconciliation, with the potential to help rebuild the social cohesion fragmented by protracted conflict” (McGlynn, 2007, p.78).

Another example of a country that was torn by the “Othering” process is South Africa. In the past, history education was a crucial component of the government’s strategies to explain, legitimize, and teach apartheid as well as the racial hierarchy in the country, and instill in the students their place in that hierarchy (Dryden-Peterson & Siebörger, 2006). At present, years after the end of the apartheid regime, teachers and students are transforming their history classes into a source of public memory making in the hopes of continuing reconciliation and national unity (Dryden-Peterson & Siebörger, 2006).

In addition to Ireland and South Africa, the Seeds of Peace program in Maine is a hopeful example of how education can be a tool for peace and understanding. Van Woerkom (2004) discusses the program in her article and relays that it was the product of journalist John Wallach’s vision about what it would take to change the situation he witnessed in the Middle East between Arabs and Israelis. The Seeds of Peace program brings together school-aged boys and girls from the growing number of conflict-torn countries and regions (e.g. Israel, Egypt, Morocco, Qatar, Tunisia, Yemen, India, Pakistan, Greek and Turkish Cypriots, the West Bank, and Gaza, as well as Immigrants and White people from the local Maine community) to experience life in camp together; they are provided a safe space to interact, get to know the “other”, experience them as

peers, even discuss and collaborate on critical issues and find ways to understand others' point of view (van Woerkom, 2004). Seeds of Peace illustrates that though education can be used to hate, through reflection and purposeful redirection, the potential of education as a vehicle for the cliché “world peace” and understanding is also undeniably powerful.

The Need for an Inclusive Curriculum In the United States

The power of education both as a tool for promoting antagonistic and possibly dangerous attitudes between groups and as a tool for healing and countering past historical conflict is evident in literature. In the United States, a nation of immigrants steeped in various cultures and languages, an inclusive curriculum is not only appropriate but also necessary. Boutte (2008), for example, summarizes the need for educating educators on promoting inclusivity with the following quote:

I am concerned that many teacher educators are not well versed on issues of diversity and the corresponding knowledge bases and, thus, will bequeath this legacy to our charges. Few of us have developed tools to address difficult issues such as discrimination and oppression, and we likely naïvely believe that if we respect the individual child, all will be well. I wonder who will provide children with the necessary critical skills and knowledge base that they will likely need. (Boutte, 2008, p. 165)

Clearly, scholars are still stressing the need to address injustice through discrimination and oppression. Education is a tool by which they believe this can be achieved. Sadly, many ethnic minority students in the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, and France – all Western democracies, still experience daily discrimination because of their cultural, linguistic, religious, and value differences (Banks, 2008). There has been a huge advance in multicultural education and increasing discussions about culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogy especially in more developed countries such as those mentioned. However, the presence of discrimination still experienced by minority

students is an indication that despite the progresses that have been made, there is a long way to go for society to reflect a truly accepting and understanding milieu for many minority citizens, residents and immigrants. Considering the harm that has been done through the use of education in the formation of negative attitudes and beliefs through direct or indirect teaching, it seems logical to seize the potential of education to open the minds of our young learners to an attitude of openness and acceptance towards those that are deemed different from them.

The process of “Othering” is almost spontaneously engaged in by all human beings (Bryan & Vavrus, 2005). Making it an educational objective to counter this process means finding a way to give young learners the tools to view others from a different, more inclusive and accepting perspective. This perspective is far from a detachment and distancing from others guised as “respect.” Instead, it is one that provides a safe space for students to be themselves. This curriculum promotes positive relationships and connections that acknowledge differences and, at the same time, gives an opportunity to look deeper into what is similar between people.

Why is this inclusive curriculum important in the teaching of young children in the U.S.? Young children in this country “increasingly represent the world in terms of ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity” (U.S. Census Bureau as cited in Adair & Bhaskaran, 2010, p. 48). In addition, Johnson and Lichter (as cited in Adair & Bhaskaran, 2010, p. 48) note that “U.S. preschoolers are most likely to encounter peers whose racial and/or cultural backgrounds differ from their own because 47 percent of young children from birth to age 4 now come from an ethnic or racial minority group. There is no question that in today’s globalized society, students who are future leaders and decision

makers will need to develop skills and attitudes that are conducive to the formation of a society that leans towards harmonious relationships between groups and countries. They need to have attitudes, knowledge and skills that will help them navigate the interconnected world they live in since “globalization affects every aspect of communities, including beliefs, norms, values, and behaviors as well as business and trade,” (Banks, 2008, p. 132).

All around the world, migration has increased diversity in most nation-states and many are considered transnational with millions living in several countries and having multiple citizenships (Banks, 2008). Because of this, every aspect of life has changed drastically including education. This is illustrated by the following quote:

Multicultural democratic nation-states must grapple with a number of salient issues, paradigms, and ideologies as their school populations become more culturally, racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse. The extent to which nation-states make multicultural citizenship possible, the achievement gap between minority and majority groups, and the language rights of immigrant and minority groups are among the unresolved and contentious issues with which these nations must grapple. (Banks, 2008, p. 132)

Despite awareness of these issues and the work that has been started to address diversity and multiculturalism in schools, there is still a great need among teachers and school administrators for actual guides and curriculum to help in their navigation of the schools’ changing and diversifying demographic. There has been effort to include and acknowledge diversity in the classrooms and schools but as Gonzales-Mena and Grishaber note,

Early childhood practitioners often strive to diversify the curriculum by including children’s cultural traditions, holidays, or foods. Yet, we know that young children need more than a celebration or a circle time story about a place or people to feel connected to groups outside their home and school worlds. (Gonzales-Mena & Grishaber as cited in Adair & Bhaskaran, 2010, p. 48)

Indeed, there is so much more to the cultural and ethnic development in young children than mere holiday celebrations. Children are very aware of differences between themselves and others not just in their physical appearances but also in varying cultural practices such as clothing, food choices, and accents or manner of speaking.

Different Yet Alike

Needless to say, children notice their physical appearances and more often than not, naturally compare and contrast their looks against other children they interact with. They hear spoken language and know when it is something dissimilar from their own. Depending on the input they receive from those that surround them, children can interpret these differences between them and others either positively or negatively. It is important to keep in mind though that actual physical characteristics are one part of categorization or labeling either by the children on themselves or on others. It has been found by researchers that the ethnic identity process for children of color begins at the earliest interaction between the child, the family, and community which is essentially at birth (Cross & Fhagen-Smith, Spencer as cited in Carnes, 1997). Carnes (1997) further elaborates that researchers have found that continual presence of personal and societal markers such as skin color, language, food choices, values, and membership in a dominant or non-dominant group implant in the minds of children ethnic roles and behaviors that prepare them for later self-labeling. Carnes gives further example through the following quote:

Robyn Holmes (1995) found that 5-year-old White children often use the word “white” to describe their own skin color, even though they use crayons in varying shades from pink to light brown to color self-portraits. Her research indicated that 5-year-old Black children tended not to use the word “black” to describe themselves. When Holmes asked Maureen, “What do you think it means when somebody says ‘You’re black?’” she answered, “People call me black but I’m

not; I'm really brown." Black children in this study described Black people as having varying shades of brown skin. (Carnes, 1997, p. 7)

Children from a multiracial background also follow a sequential pattern of color differentiation, racial awareness and self labeling and in addition, they show to develop racial awareness earlier than White children and later than their Black peers usually around the ages of three and four (Johnson as cited in Carnes, 1997). It is clear that racial attributes are prominent in the perception of young children and are an integral part of their coming to awareness of their own and others' identity. But it is also evident that social interaction and input from those with whom the child interacts are just as important in the formation of their identity. Identity is defined here as:

— an understanding of who we are and who we are not — is a complex, multifaceted process that begins in childhood and continues throughout life. Early in their identity development, children become aware of a wide range of physical characteristics in themselves and others, including those we call racial — skin color, facial features, hair texture. Likewise, young children acquire ethnic values, customs, language styles and behavioral codes long before they are able to label and know them as ethnic. (Carnes, 1997, p. 7)

Carnes (1997) observes that a self-portraiture exercise, for example, that explores and validates individual traits and perceptions help to orient young children in their social sphere and provides an opportunity to develop a clear sense of their own physical and emotional identity, which in turn permits them to regard their peers as unique equals.

Language and language learning is another essential aspect of the diversity that is found in our schools at present. As it is, entering a new place is already a terrifying experience for most young children. Add to this, linguistic isolation in an unfamiliar classroom can leave a student feeling alone, unsafe and unimportant when the home language differs from the language of the school environment (Carnes, 1997). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (as cited in Carnes, 1997), approximately 31.8 million

residents of the U.S., more than one in seven, have a primary language other than English. Even more impressive is that contrary to popular belief, most U.S. school children from non-English speaking families are native-born citizens (Carnes, 1997).

Because of the diversity in the population of the U.S., many educators and parents may conclude that children will learn by default to accept peers and other people who look different from them because they are used to having diversity surrounding them in their daily lives. However, Carnes (1997, p. 8) cautions us on this saying, “to minimize for young people the reality of these physical differences- ‘in our room, we don’t see color’- can be as harmful as ignoring the social and political implications of race.”

Diversity and Inclusion in the Early Childhood Classroom

Educators and researchers have demonstrated that creating an inclusive, accepting, and respectful classroom curriculum and environment is possible in the early childhood setting. The first factor to consider is the teacher. The teacher in a diverse early childhood classroom is an influential force in setting the tone and level of inclusivity in the school. Cultural knowledge is not enough to ensure that a teacher will be culturally responsive in the classroom according to Cherrington and Green (2010). Teachers need to be able to couple this knowledge with the ability to be reflective and critical of their current practice as well as the courage to look closely at and deconstruct their many taken-for-granted classroom management routines and strategies done year after year – a process that is very uncomfortable for many educators (Cherrington & Green, 2010).

In addition, Cherrington and Green (2010) further clarify this topic by listing five components of a culturally responsive classroom based on the literature on culturally responsive pedagogy, multicultural counseling, and caring. These components include: 1)

the recognition of one's own ethnocentrism; 2) knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds; 3) developing an understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context in order for teachers to understand the pursuit of social justice and the need for culturally responsive classrooms; 4) the ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate management strategies; and 5) commitment to building caring classrooms. Barrera and Corso, Ladson-Billings, and Sanchez (as cited in Chen, Nimmo, & Fraser 2009) concur stating that raising self-awareness in educators in order to have a strong understanding of their own biases, identity, and cultural beliefs is foremost before teachers are able to empower and affirm their own students. With this confidence, teachers need to draw on their students' culture and knowledge acknowledging it as a means and not an impediment by which students can learn what the school community prescribes (Ladson-Billings as cited in Chen et al., 2009).

As simple as it seems, one of the more important characteristics of an inclusive classroom is the opportunity for students to share their voice and express their thoughts. Carnes (1997, p. 2) notes that one teacher considers Sharing Time "the most important activity of the day" for her class. When children, she says, are given an opportunity to share, cooperation is sure to follow for the rest of the day (Carnes, 1997). Buchanan (as cited in Carnes, 1997, p. 2) supports this viewpoint as she expresses,

in most school situations, kids come to school able to talk, and we immediately shut them up. In the traditional classroom, the first thing that goes is their voice. We want them to write, we want them to read, but we don't want them to talk.

One part of management during sharing time is the educator's strategy on when and how children are allowed to share. But more important than the fire and traffic kind of management, creating an emotionally safe space, one where compassion, fairness and an

understanding of how people belong and who belongs as well as the connection we have with each other is key to this kind of sharing (Carnes, 1997).

As mentioned earlier, language learning is another characteristic of culturally and ethnically diverse classrooms. In order for teachers in these settings to be successful with diverse linguistic groups, teachers must “acknowledge the functions of language beyond direct exchange of information. Every language embodies both the historical experience of a particular group and the conscious effort by that group to transmit its collective values” (Vygostky as cited in Carnes, 1997, p. 10). Acknowledgement of a child’s language other than English in the classroom promotes an idea of welcome not just of the non-native English speaker but also of the customs, traditions and culture that is attached to the child’s primary language. Kirmani (2007) relates that at her son’s school, the focus on English, as critical as it is to academic success, resulted in a lack of attention to the rich traditions of his other languages. She further discusses support of research on the development of the home language as the foundation for learning other languages and that teachers need to emphasize and support its use both at home and in the child’s classroom (Kirmani, 2007).

Families are both an important component of and a resource for promoting acceptance and inclusivity in diverse classroom settings. Early childhood teachers who acknowledge and celebrate a wide variety of families in the curriculum can discourage prejudice and reinforce the vital link between home and school (Carnes, 1997).

Teachers are able to increase their cultural knowledge by inviting families to share in the classroom, whether it is a piece of artifact, music, a custom or practice or family pictures. Knowledge about children’s families adds to an educator’s knowledge about their

students' cultural background, which provides him/her with an opportunity to view each child from a different lens, one that is less ethnocentric and more understanding of the student's cultural identity.

The family is the primary source for the development of a child's cultural identity and their role in promoting an inclusive classroom is crucial and necessary. As stated earlier, cultural identity, as Cherrington and Green (2010) state, is complex and multifaceted. Names, for example, are an important part of cultural identity and inviting parents to share about the significance and meaning of their child's name is an acknowledgement of both the child and the family (Kirmani, 2007). Although there might be some initial hesitation on the part of families to come in and share with the class, there are ways to work around this. Immigrant families are usually unsure as to what the teacher and the school expect from them and language can be an additional barrier to their involvement in their child's classroom. However, a simple note that is translated in several languages through computer translation is accessible and could contribute to the creation of a culturally responsive classroom (Kirmani, 2007). Another factor that invites the teacher to a student's family life is home visits. A study of head start educators show that home visits enabled participants to see the families and children that they work with from a different and more positive perspective allowing for a better understanding of the children and their families from historical and cultural perspectives (Lin & Bates, 2010).

Challenges to Creating a Culturally Responsive Classroom

Research has pointed out the value of cultural responsiveness in the classrooms and the benefits that result from valuing the knowledge and skills that students from varying background bring with them. However, translating these ideas into classroom

practices has been a challenge for many schools and educators. In her review of the literature, Smith (2013) cites that a large majority of practicing teachers in the U.S. are white women and with the continued growth of an ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse student population, the need for teachers to be introduced to multicultural pedagogy and to develop a philosophy that embraces diversity has become more of a necessity. Some resources have been made available to teachers and theories have been formulated regarding the creation of more culturally responsive classrooms in the U.S. However, it has not been as easy as educators would like for it to be. This struggle, though may be viewed as an important indicator of practitioners' intentional efforts toward acting on their value of diversity, can also be an indicator for the need to revisit the existing resources available to teachers (Chen et al., 2009). Boutte (2008) states the following:

When examining the ethos in most schools, the valuation of diversity is not readily apparent in teacher attitudes, instructional practices, curricula, and school policies. Although rapidly changing demographics and accompanying negative performance trends of students from nonmainstream backgrounds implore educators to consider issues of diversity and equity, teachers give little or no substantive attention to sociocultural and sociopolitical issues that mediate teaching and learning in an increasingly diverse world. (Boutte, 2008, p. 165)

There is an obvious need to widen the focus of the attention given by educators to diversity beyond negative student performance to the more positive aspects and potential that their minority students bring to the classroom as well as the complex issues that affect student learning and integration.

Existing classroom materials may present another challenge to creating an inclusive classroom. Boutte (2008) exemplifies this in her own experiences with her son's schools. She notes that most of the books are Eurocentric or portrayed characters,

such as animals, who illustrate mainstream values and lifestyles. According to Boutte (2008), presenting an occasional book or two about certain ethnic groups or reading stories now and again of people of color sends strong messages about what is normal and what is not. Creating an inclusive classroom means being intentional and purposeful in the materials that are made available to students in a diverse classroom. Care should be taken to show that racial and cultural lines exist but that it is possible and ideal for people to work and cross these socially established lines.

Another difficulty arises when we take into account the fact that discussions on race, ethnicity, gender, etc. have not been a regular part of classroom dialogues. Boutte (2008) labels this as a drawback but also strongly suggests that though delving into these issues entail work and could potentially be messy, not engaging in a discussion of these issues at all could lead to the festering of faulty beliefs and stereotypes. With young children, this is an area that is especially challenging given this particular age group's limitations in seeing gray areas in an issue. As Cowhey narrates,

... conventional wisdom regarding what young children are capable of processing makes many teachers understandably leery about venturing into such serious topics... obviously, the degree of information presented to children will vary with age and sociocultural contexts; however, students can relate historical events to current ones in their lives. (Cowhey as cited in Bouttes, 2008, p. 169-170)

The tackling of such big issues even in the youngest school-aged children using education as a primary tool is something we need to take seriously if we are to change the way people live and relate to one another.

Summary

Literature has pointed out the ways in which education can be tool for the promotion of positive or negative attitudes between different groups, the perpetuation of

biased views of important historical events, as well as a path to reconciliation and healing. It is clear that education has a very important role to play in the formation of students' ways of thinking and critiquing as well as in the curtailment or festering of the big issues such as racism, labeling, and stereotyping. In addition, literature has reflected that the early childhood years are particularly important in getting students started on the path towards openness and inclusivity. In order to tackle big issues in the early childhood classroom, adjustments need to be made taking into consideration the students' age, ability to process information as well as the context in which they relate these issues in their lives. The role of the teacher and their work towards becoming more culturally sensitive cannot be emphasized enough if we are to continue on the journey towards more inclusive education. Much progress and acknowledgement for inclusion and diversity in the curriculum has been made but there are obstacles that remain to be overcome. However great these obstacles may be though, failure to start addressing them may be detrimental to a vision of the future consisting of peace and harmonious relationships among people in society.

CHAPTER III THE PROJECT AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Description of the Project

This field project was designed for the purpose of creating space and providing a resource and handbook for teaching the ideas of respect, acceptance and inclusion in ethnically and culturally diverse early childhood education settings. It is divided into three major parts with the third part containing three sections. Part one is focused on setting up the classroom environment; the second part talks about the culturally responsive teacher; and the third part contains activities and ideas for the classroom. More details about each part of the project are discussed in the last section of this chapter.

Development of the Project

The project was developed over the course of half a year and grew out of my current early childhood teaching position in a culturally diverse classroom and my interest in the use of education to counter the conflict and polarization that is prevalent in many parts of the world. So many past and present social issues are a result of division among groups of people along ethnic, racial, cultural, religious, or political lines. As I learned about how education has been manipulated to antagonize groups between one another, I wondered about the work that has been done to do the reverse-- promoting understanding and respect-- and thought of its applicability to very young, school-aged children.

Many of the studies that I encountered were focused on older grade levels-- middle and high school students. As a long-time early childhood teacher, I have always believed in the importance of the early childhood years as a crucial time of formation for our ways of thinking, our orientation and beliefs towards others, and the way we perceive

the world. This is the main reason why I chose this particular age group to center on in the creation of this project.

As I embarked on the project, I started becoming more aware of the cultural nuances that I observe in relationships between parents and other parents and children and other children and wondered if relationships in schools located in diverse areas such as here in San Francisco could be taken from good to better in terms of interactions with and perceptions of each other. I kept a journal to document my thoughts and tried to keep my observations in mind as I focused the activities and suggestions in the handbook on the literature on hand. In the end, I believe that this project could definitely be taken many steps further with dialogue and further collaboration with other educators and community members.

The Project

As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, the project handbook is divided into three parts. Part one contains ways to set up the classroom, suggestions on examining classroom materials and displays, and being purposeful in the selection of literacy tools while teaching children. It also contains some suggestions and references for books and websites that can diversify children's literature even in the early childhood stage. The second part focuses on the culturally responsive teacher and cites literature that points to attitudes and things an educator can be mindful of and actively do to increase his or her awareness and promote cultural inclusivity in the classroom.

The third part, which is the longest, contains several activities and suggestions for the classroom that promote inclusivity and acceptance. It is divided into three sections. The first section deals with routines that promote interest and respect for other cultures

and languages. Section two has three lessons/activities that can start children with an appreciation for their own and others' physical traits. The last section of part three has activities designed to promote an interest in and respect for other cultures and traditions by encountering different cultural traditions, celebrations, and holidays in the classroom. Though the scope and focus of the project may be limited, it is my hope that this could further develop to a program that has more integration and connection to the actual curricula used in the early childhood grades. This approach could further widen the opportunity to use education as a positive tool for community building and laying the foundations for dialogue between people.

The handbook for this field project is appended at the end of this paper with the title "It's A Small World After All: Teaching Acceptance, Inclusion and Respect In Ethnically and Culturally Diverse Early Childhood Classroom Settings."

CHAPTER IV CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

The United States has grown increasingly diverse over the course of many years and it is in this diversity that many believe lays its strength as a nation. It is a smaller reflection of the diversity that is in our world today. This diversity though, could also be a source of potential division as has been seen in the country's history and in many other parts of the world. Education has been a very important driving force in the promotion of either antagonism or harmony between groups. Given the increasing diversity in this country and its schools and the power of education to guide people towards diversity or unity, it is necessary for teachers who are interested in exposing their students to concepts of inclusion, respect, and acceptance to have access to a resource guide and model for implementing a curriculum that is culturally and ethnically inclusive.

This project aimed, at a very small and limited scale, to use education and the unique public school demographic in culturally diverse cities to promote a positive atmosphere of welcome and understanding in children from varying cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The theories of interculturalism, multiculturalism, and cultural wealth capital, in addition to the many studies on the intersection of early childhood education, race, culture and ethnicity, contributed to the ideas for this project. This handbook hopes to present educators who are privileged to be in a culturally diverse classroom, a source of ideas to start using more inclusive practices and activities among their students. This project is a beginning and it does not cover everything. However, it is my aspiration that it can be further developed to maximize its use in contributing to a better society of diversity.

Recommendations

It was my initial intent that this project be piloted in my own classroom to test the questions, activities, and materials, examine the feasibility of each activity in the actual classroom setting, and make necessary adjustments. Due to time constraints, this did not happen before the deadline for the submission of this field project. Piloting this handbook would be a natural next step in its development. Piloting and evaluating this program in an actual early childhood classroom can definitely improve its relevance and applicability. Teachers and their students are the best critics that can say whether this handbook is helpful and what areas are to be added, removed, or modified. Further collaboration with other early childhood educators and scholars will certainly deepen and clarify the outline and activities presented here and add many more ideas to the handbook.

Secondly, as much as I would like to suggest that all the activities and ideas be tried out in the classroom, some teachers may find that the handbook may be too overwhelming to fit in a school year along with the original school or state curriculum that needs to be implemented. I recommend that teachers read through the manual and as an initial step, pick the activities that they could tie in immediately with their own curriculum lessons. Each time it is used, more insight can be gained as to which parts of the year the activities and suggestions are feasible to use. As teachers familiarize themselves with the ideas, more of the activities could be included as part of their planning.

As a classroom teacher myself, I know that getting families involved with school activities is crucial not just for this program but also for the success of any classroom and

individual students. But just as well and as many teachers know, parent/family involvement in some communities may be a bit of a challenge. This study is limited in the sense that the concept of family involvement does not go beyond coming in to the classroom and doing a couple of activities with the students. There is definitely a fertile ground of ideas for collaborating with families and encouraging family participation that have yet to be included in this handbook. An example I learned from a colleague but did not include in the handbook is “family night.” Some teachers organize their early childhood classrooms with three to five families hosting a dinner to celebrate and build their community with gathering, food, and sharing every month or so. This and many other family involvement activities could definitely be developed from the ideas from literature and from early childhood teachers.

It is important to keep in mind for any educator that comes across this handbook that it was created with an American elementary classroom in mind, particularly a classroom in the highly diverse San Francisco Bay Area. However, the concepts of respect, acceptance and inclusion, I believe are applicable to any classroom that wants to promote these values in their students. The activities can serve as a reference guide or a source of ideas for coming up with modified activities that are more suited for a particular classroom or cultural setting.

Finally, initiating a certain idea in the classroom can definitely be more effective if it is done in collaboration with a wider population such as the school or district community. Steps to start working with administrators and colleagues to get conversations started about inclusivity and acceptance in the whole school or district is definitely something missing and could be a crucial component of this handbook. This

would ensure that there is continuity in the teaching and reinforcement of these concepts beyond the early childhood levels of education.

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APPENDIX A

“It’s A Small World After All”: Teaching Respect, Inclusion, and Acceptance in
Ethnically and Culturally Diverse Early Childhood Classrooms

A Handbook For Early Childhood Educators and Practitioners

A Handbook For
Early Childhood
Educators and
Practitioners



“It’s A Small World
After All”

Teaching Respect, Inclusion, and
Acceptance in Ethnically and Culturally
Diverse Early Childhood Classrooms

by Romina S. Sapinoso

**“It’s A Small World After All”: Teaching Respect, Inclusion,
and Acceptance in Ethnically and Culturally Diverse Early
Childhood Classrooms**

A Handbook for Early Childhood Educators and Practitioners

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December 2014

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Introduction

Inspiration

This handbook was borne out of my experiences of teaching in a highly diverse school district located in the San Francisco Bay Area. Even with fifteen years of experience under my belt, I felt at a loss when I first came in to meet my new students and their families. The diversity I saw was a beautiful sight to behold but I felt many times during that first year that I was not able to fully appreciate and show my students the beauty and wealth of what was in our little classroom. I wished then that I had a tool to help me integrate the richness of the different backgrounds that I and my students bring with us and tie it with our curriculum. It would have been very useful to have somebody point to resources – books, activities, or websites, that I could use to acknowledge and honor the variety of culture, traditions, and unique ethnic identities that my students and I were so privileged to be immersed in.

Diversity in the US

The US has become increasingly ethnically and racially diverse over the years and can be described as being “on the cusp of a profound transformation in terms of its demographic composition” (Durand, 2010, p. 838). The SF Bay Area has also experienced this same shift in its demographics. Hendricks (2005) describes this region’s diversity as

“eclipsed only by that of the metropolitan regions of Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, and Chicago.” The US census reports that there is a total of 112 languages spoken in the Bay Area making it the fifth in terms of linguistic variation in the nation (Hendricks, 2005). This setting makes the perfect backdrop for the ideas that have been forming in my mind as I embarked on my Masters program in education at the University of San Francisco.

Education as a power tool

During my program at USF, I have become more aware of how education has been used in the past to develop antagonistic views towards other groups or nations resulting in large-scale discrimination, wars, and even genocide. When this happens, we can say that “Othering” has occurred. This definition of the self in opposition to the other or the

“Othering” process can deepen into an objectification and dehumanization of those who are deemed different and therefore can be morally excluded from society (Bryan & Vavrus, 2005). However, education has also been used to heal, to promote harmonious relationships, and to unite previously divided people.

“We inhabit a universe that is characterized by diversity.”

– Desmond Tutu

Introduction

An example of education as a tool for healing is the country of South Africa previously divided by apartheid. At present, teachers and students in this country are transforming their history classes into a source of public memory making in the hopes of continuing reconciliation and national unity (Dryden-Peterson & Siebörger, 2006). Another example is the Seeds of Peace program which brings together school-aged boys and girls from the growing number of conflict-torn groups, countries, and regions (e.g. Israel, Egypt, Morocco, Qatar, Tunisia, Yemen, India, Pakistan, Turkish and Greek Cypriots, the West Bank, and Gaza, as well as Immigrant and White people in the local Maine community) to experience life in camp together (van Woerkom, 2004).



Through a proactive model of education that emphasizes respect, acceptance, and the inclusion of everyone, we can show what is possible in the creation of relationships that are respectful, engaged, and harmoniously working together to bring about progress and true equality for all. This project has very small and humble beginnings but it is guided by a hope to see one world that is no longer divided by racial, ethnic, cultural and other lines. It is my hope as

The value of inclusive education in the U.S.

The power of education is beyond limits. Our students in the United States are in a special position to model a society with the unique integration of people of different ethnicities, languages, and cultures.



an educator that this project contributes somehow to this lofty ideal.

Who can use this handbook?



Teacher teaching students in an early childhood setting by woodleywonderworks licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic license

This handbook was conceived while keeping in mind the diverse demographics of elementary public schools in the United States, specifically in the San Francisco Bay Area in the state of

California. It is especially targeted for

any elementary school or grade level setting where teachers hope to promote inclusivity and respect in the classroom.



Early childhood educators are the primary audience for this handbook but any teacher can benefit from the concepts and resources provided. Parents may also benefit from perusing the contents of this handbook and reading further on the literature that supports what was included here.



School Friends by woodleywonderworks licensed under Creative Commons

use towards classrooms of younger children between the grades Transitional Kindergarten, Kindergarten, First, and Second. However, it can be modified for use in

Part One:

The Classroom

Environment

"It is in the shelter of each other that the people live."

- Irish proverb

Part One: Setting up the classroom environment

Examining materials in the classroom

Teachers know that every classroom comes with a set of materials already available either as part of the curriculum that the school district implements or as hand me downs from a previous teacher in that classroom. As a teacher sifts through materials in the classroom, he/she needs to closely look at what hidden messages the materials could be sending to the students. Boutte (2008) exemplifies this in her own experiences with her son's schools. She notes that most of the books are Eurocentric or portrayed characters, such as animals, who illustrate mainstream values and lifestyles. According to Boutte (2008) presenting an occasional book or two about certain ethnic groups or reading stories now and again of people of color sends strong messages about what is normal and what is not.

Creating an inclusive classroom means being intentional and purposeful in the materials that are made available to students in a diverse classroom. Care should be taken to acknowledge that racial and cultural lines exist but that it is possible and ideal for people to work and cross these socially established lines. Look at the materials you have and see if there is more culturally relevant literature or items that you can incorporate, substitute, or use to supplement what you have in the classroom. Music, play materials such as cookware or even clothes in the dress up area could be areas where multiculturalism could be recognized more. Going through everything will not happen at once but starting with what is in the classroom is a beginning. As the year goes by, the teacher can then work his or her way into

critiquing units that are being covered in the curriculum and watching for opportunities to use more culturally relevant instruments.

Welcome posters and decorations

Usually, early childhood classrooms have lots of wall space that are left bare for the purpose of displaying student work. However, if you choose to put up some pre-made classroom pictures or posters, take care in selecting those which depict diversity in them. Many classroom posters now show diversity in illustrating children and teachers in the classroom. Pick the ones that clearly show differences in skin color, ethnicity, clothing, ability, etc. The teacher should ask himself or herself the question, "As soon as my students enter and look around the room, can they identify with some of the people pictured in these posters?"

It is also always empowering for the students when their own work is on display in the classroom. As much as possible, let your posters and decorations be the students' own work as well as posters that you have created together in class.



Children by Arya Creative Designs from Open Clip Art

Part One: Setting up the classroom environment

Culturally relevant classroom materials

Teachers always spend quite a bit of their own money in the process of creating fun and learning-filled activities for their students. Literature is a component of the classroom whose importance cannot be emphasized enough. In an ethnically inclusive classroom, it is even more important that the books available and used in collaboration with the curriculum are culturally relevant. Some more diversified reading materials have been included in lists over the recent years. Remember that the public library is an excellent resource for books that you can keep for at least two weeks in your classroom. In the following page is a suggested list of early childhood appropriate picture books that can be used to supplement the curriculum in the classroom.

Other websites and resources

A classroom lesson plan book that can be helpful in giving information as well as organizing around holidays and celebrations is *Planning To Change The World* available at:
<http://www.justiceplanbook.com>.

Finally, a website that contains a wealth of lessons, materials and ideas to promote global thinking, languages and multiculturalism is www.kidworldcitizen.org.

These are just a few items that teachers who would like to engage in a



Intricate floor design in Tamil Nadu by McKay Savage licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 Generic License

more ethnically and culturally inclusive classroom can reference in their efforts to address the needs of their students.

The following book list was taken from two articles that reference diversity in children's literature. A synopsis of each title can be found in the articles through the following website addresses:

<http://blogs.kqed.org/mindshift/2014/06/25-ideas-to-diversify-reading-lists-this-summer/>

<http://nerdybookclub.wordpress.com/2014/08/09/top-10-picture-books-for-activists-in-training-by-mathangi-subramanian/>

It's A Small World After All

Suggested list of children's books to diversify literature in the classroom

The Boy Who Didn't Believe in Spring by Lucille Clifton

Bravo, Chico Canta! Bravo! by Pat Mora and Libby Martinez

Bringing Asha Home by Uma Krishnaswami

Brush of the Gods by Lenore Look

The Christmas Coat: Memories of My Sioux Childhood by Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve

Come on, Rain! by Karen Hesse

Corduroy by Don Freeman

Dumpling Soup by Jama Kim Rattigan

The Fortune-Tellers by Lloyd Alexander

The Girl Who Loved Wild Horses by Paul Goble

Grandfather's Journey by Allen Say

The Hello, Goodbye Window by Norton Juster

How My Family Came to Be: Daddy, Papa and Me by Andrew Aldrich

I'm in Charge of Celebrations by Byrd Baylor

Life Doesn't Frighten Me by Maya Angelou; edited by Sara Jane Boyers

Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match by Monica Brown

My Name is Yoon by Helen Recorvits

Niño Wrestles the World by Yuyi Morales

Ruby's Wish by Shirin Yim Bridges

The Snowy Day by Ezra Jack Keats

Tomás and the Library Lady by Pat Mora

The Storyteller's Candle by Lucia Gonzalez

Umbrella by Taro Yashima

When the Shadbush Blooms by Carla Messinger and Suzan Katz

Yo! Yes? by Chris Raschka



Children's books by ProjectManhattan licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license

Something Beautiful by Sharon Dennis Wyeth

The Why Why Girl by Maheshwati Devi

Catch that Cat by Tharini Viswanath

Four Feet, Two Sandals by Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammed,

King and King by Linda de Haan and Stern Nijland

Black Misery by Langston Hughes

Pancho Rabbit and the Coyote: A

Migrant's Tale by Duncan Tonatiuh

Bird by Zetta Elliott

A is for Activist by Innosanto Nagara

Click Clack Moo: Cows that Type by Doreen Cronin

Part Two: The Culturally Responsive Teacher

"We need to help students and parents cherish and preserve the ethnic and cultural diversity that nourishes and strengthens this community."

- Cesar Chávez

Part Two: The Culturally Responsive Teacher



Cherrington and Green (2010) list five components of a culturally responsive classroom teacher based on the literature on culturally responsive pedagogy, multicultural counseling, and caring:

- 1) The recognition of one's own ethnocentrism
- 2) Knowledge of students' cultural backgrounds
- 3) Developing an understanding of the broader social, economic, and political context in order for teachers to understand the pursuit of social justice and the need for culturally responsive classrooms
- 4) The ability and willingness to use culturally appropriate management strategies
- 5) Commitment to building caring classrooms.

When examining the ethos in most schools, the valuation of diversity is not readily apparent in teacher attitudes, instructional practices, curricula, and school policies. Although rapidly changing demographics and accompanying negative performance trends of students from non mainstream backgrounds implore educators to consider issues of diversity and equity, teachers give little or no substantive attention to sociocultural and sociopolitical issues that mediate teaching and learning in an increasingly diverse world. (Boutte, 2008, p. 165)

The teacher in a diverse early childhood classroom is an influential force in setting the

tone and level of inclusivity in the school. A teacher may be well traveled, knows more than one or two languages, and has a history of exposure to different cultures through food, conversations, and lifestyle. However, cultural knowledge is not enough to ensure that a teacher will be culturally responsive in the classroom according to Cherrington and Green (2010). Teachers need to be able to couple this knowledge with the ability to be reflective and critical of their current practice as well as the courage to look closely at and deconstruct their many taken-for-granted classroom management routines and strategies done year after year – a process that is very uncomfortable for many educators (Cherrington & Green, 2010).

Part Two: The Culturally Responsive Teacher

The journey towards inclusivity and acceptance in the classroom begins with the raising of awareness within an educator of his or her own understanding or lack of towards those who are a minority. Barrera and Corso, Ladson-Billings, and Sanchez (as cited in Chen, Nimmo, & Fraser 2009) concur stating that raising self-awareness in educators in order to have a strong understanding of their own biases, identity, and cultural beliefs is foremost before teachers are able to empower and affirm their own students. With this confidence, teachers need to draw on their students' culture and knowledge acknowledging it as a means and not an impediment by which students can learn what the school community prescribes (Ladson-Billings as cited in Chen et al., 2009).

Becoming a culturally responsive teacher is not an easy task but can be very rewarding for someone who wants to put their students first in their teaching. It is not much different from being a critical and responsive teacher. It just employs more consciousness and a wider embrace to include and create space for the cultural wealth that students come with. A culturally responsive teacher demonstrates that a student's primary language, ethnicity, previous knowledge, and personal identity is valued and respected enough in the classroom to be included and celebrated in purposeful activities and lessons. He or she recognizes that in so doing, the students receive a model of openness, respect, and acceptance for every single person in their classroom that they will carry with them as adults and members of the wider community.



Part Three:

Activities to Help Create an Inclusive and Respectful Classroom

"We may have different religions, different languages, different colored skin, but we all belong to one human race."

- Kofi Annan

Section One:

Establishing routines that convey an atmosphere of cultural and ethnic inclusion

“Diversity is the magic. It is the first manifestation, the beginning of the differentiation of a thing and of a simple identity. The greater the diversity, the greater the perfection.”

-Thomas Berry

Part Three, Section One: Establishing Routines



Carnes, 1997, p. 10).

Acknowledgement in the classroom of a child's language other than English promotes an idea of welcome not just of the non-native English speaker but also of the customs, traditions and culture that is attached to the child's

I Can't Hear You by woodleywonderworks licensed under Creative Commons

Creating a culturally and ethnically inclusive classroom may take a while and quite a bit of effort but it is definitely doable and worth it. Routines are an essential component of every successful classroom. Routines send out a message of order, expectation and organization in the classroom. Children fall easily into an established, organized routine and makes transitions in the classroom much easier.

Purposefully creating routines and regular activities that promote inclusion send an even better message to the students. It tells them that this is their space. They belong here. This is a place of openness and welcome for everyone. It is a place where they can learn about others who are different yet the same as them.

Greetings and Goodbyes

Language learning is a characteristic of culturally and ethnically diverse classrooms. For these settings to be successful with diverse linguistic groups, teachers must "acknowledge the functions of language beyond direct exchange of information. Every language embodies both the historical experience of a particular group and the conscious effort by that group to transmit its collective values (Vygostky as cited in

primary language.

Calling the roll everyday can be an instrument to promote language learning and appreciation in the early childhood classroom. Teachers can pick a greeting in a different language for the students to use during each week with a brief background about what language it is and where it is spoken. If a globe is available, teacher may choose to show which parts of the world this greeting is used besides groups in the United States that speak it. As teacher calls the roll, he or she can say, for example, "Hola, Kelly!" to which the students are to respond back with the same such as, "Hola, Mrs. Smith!" As children leave, teacher can also use the same method for saying goodbye by using a different language every week. As each greeting is used, a wall chart with the different greeting and goodbye expressions could be put up and added to, promoting literacy as well as multiculturalism in the classroom. Teacher may prioritize languages she/he knows the students in class speak through information obtained from parents or the school demographics. Parents can be a good resource for collecting greetings in different languages.

Part Three, Section One: Establishing Routines

Giving Voice and Affirmation to Students Through Sharing Time

Students love to share. There may be one or two that are timid and a little hesitant but for the most part, children in the early childhood years of development are uninhibited when sharing their thoughts and stories. As simple as it seems, one of the more important characteristics of an inclusive classroom is the opportunity for students to share their voice and express their thoughts. Carnes (1997, p. 2) notes that one teacher considers Sharing Time “the most important activity of the day” for her class.” When children, she says, are given an opportunity to share, cooperation is sure to follow for the rest of the day (Carnes, 1997).

Establishing a routine of sharing thoughts, whether it is at the beginning of the day or towards the end, can contribute to the affirmation of each student in the classroom. One part of management during sharing time is the educator’s strategy on when and how children

are allowed to share. But more important than the fire and traffic kind of management, creating an emotionally safe space, one where compassion, fairness and an understanding of how people belong and who belongs as well as the connection we have with each other is key to this kind of sharing (Carnes, 1997).

Family Involvement in the Classroom

Inviting families to be present in the classroom requires a bit of planning ahead and organization on the teacher’s part. However, one will find that it is a fruitful endeavor especially in the achievement of the objectives of this curriculum. Families are both an important component of and a resource for promoting acceptance and inclusivity in diverse classroom settings.

Punjabi Indians at wedding by Scarletletter4455 licensed under Creative Commons 2.0 license



First grade reading by Woodleywonderworks licensed under Creative Commons 2.0

Benefits of Celebrating the Spectrum of Families in the Curriculum (Carnes, 1997):

- a.) *Discourage prejudgment and reinforce the link between home and school*
- b.) *Teachers are able to increase cultural knowledge*
- c.) *Knowledge about children’s families adds to an educator’s knowledge about students’ cultural backgrounds*
- d.) *Provides an opportunity for the educator to view each child from a different, less ethnocentric lens*



Part Three, Section One: Establishing Routines

Although there might be some initial hesitation on the part of families to come in and share with the class, there are ways to work around this. Immigrant families are usually unsure as to what the teacher and the school expect from them and language can be an additional barrier to their involvement in their child's classroom. However, a simple note that is translated in several languages through computer translation is accessible and could contribute to the creation of a culturally responsive classroom (Kirmani, 2007). Another factor that invites the teacher to a student's family life is home visits. A study of head start educators show that home visits enabled participants to see the families and children that they work

with from a different and more positive perspective allowing for a better understanding of the children and their families from historical and cultural perspectives (Lin & Bates, 2010).



First day school bus ritual by woodleywonderworks licensed under Creative Commons

To plan ahead, teachers must look at the demographics of their students as well as the area in which the school is located. There are many traditions, holidays and customs that can be incorporated into the learning of early childhood skills such as

and celebrations with the class. Ask the families for any family or cultural traditions that they are willing to come in to the class and share with the students. At the beginning of the year, request volunteers who would be willing to be part of the various activities and celebrations in the classroom assuring them that no special skill or knowledge is required. The more welcome parents and family members feel in the classroom, the more open they can potentially be about sharing their cultural knowledge with the class.



art, music, social studies that could also be relevant to the social milieu of the school and community (see section III activities on traditions and holidays). Create a festivities calendar and invite families to come and share their festivities



Christmas story by woodleywonderworks licensed under Creative Commons



Section Two:

Activities to help children notice
and appreciate their own and
others' physical traits

*"We need to reach that happy
stage of our development when
differences and diversity are
not seen as a source of
division and distrust, but of
strength and inspiration"*

-Josefa Iloilo

Part Three, Section Two: Mirrors

List of suggested read-aloud books to the class leading up to the next three lessons:

Shades of People by Shelley Rotner

The Skin You Live In by Michael Tyler and David Lee Csicsko

The Colors of Us by Karen Katz

We Are All Alike, We Are All Different by Cheltenham Elementary Kindergartners

Activity 1: Mirrors

Idea adapted and developed from Carnes (1997)

Duration of Activity: 2 days, 30 minutes each.

Lesson Objectives:

1. To notice one's own facial and physical features.
2. To describe what one sees in his/her physical appearance using accurate, more specific terms.
3. To notice differences between each other and dialogue about what is observed in a respectful, honest way.

Materials Needed:

Hand held mirrors
Full-length mirrors

Procedure:

Day 1

It is assumed that at least one or several of the books suggested for read-aloud or any other available book that tackles the same topic on physical attributes (skin, hair, eye color, etc.) have been read to the class.

Start the activity by telling the students that today they will be looking at their physical attributes very closely. Explain what attributes are – the color, shape, size, or kind of something. Prepare a chart before hand that lists different parts of the body that the children will be paying close attention to such as hair, skin, and eyes. Leave room under each body part for student responses about what they notice.

Give students a hand-held mirror and ask them to look first at their hair. What attributes do they notice? What color is their hair? Is it straight, wavy, or curly? Is it long or short? Write down the students' responses and accompany the list with visual notes such as curly lines for curly hair, straight lines for straight hair and use crayons to denote color so the children are aware of what is on the list they are contributing to.

Part Three, Section Two: Mirrors



Mirror, mirror by Sharon Mollerus licensed under Creative Commons

Do the same thing for their eyes, noses, lips, and finally their skin color. Note down the students' observation of their own physical attributes. Let them describe in their own words what they are seeing and ask follow-up questions to answers that they can further expound on or rephrase to make more accurate (e.g. "my skin is white" – ask, is it white like paper?). This careful questioning and encouragement may lead students to re-think the word "white" and may encourage them to refer to other colors such as peach, or light brown, etc. However, make sure to affirm each child's voice and what they are ready to notice at this time. Again, list the characteristics that students mention for each body part that they are looking at.

End day 1 by recapping the things they noticed about their physical attributes. Go over the chart and commend the students for being accurate and descriptive in their noticing of attributes.

Day 2

On the following day, bring in at least one full-length mirror. Have students stand side by side with another peer. Demonstrate how they can tell the person standing next to them looking at the mirror what they notice are the same and different about their own and their friend's physical attributes. You might want to do this with a partner teacher or a volunteer child, making sure to demonstrate an objective and respectful way of comparing (e.g. My hair is black and straight and yours is brown and curly).

You may also do this using just the hand held mirror for each child. They can sit across from each other and look at each part of their body (the same ones they looked at yesterday) in the mirror and then look at the same body part on the person sitting across from them.

Guide the students from one body part to another. They can either stay with one partner or find a different partner to compare each body part with.

At the end of the activity, have the students gather in a circle and ask them what they noticed were the differences between them and their peers. Again, encourage them to use their own words as you guide them to be respectful in their language in describing attributes.

The more important thing to ask students is to notice the similarities or likeness between themselves and their peers despite the differences that we noticed. Spend some time with this and engage the students with follow up questions making sure they are able to express as much of their thoughts and ideas as possible.

Part Three, Section Two: Self Portraits



People paper cutouts by Kids Crafts Plus. Photo from Amazon.com

Idea adapted and developed from Carnes (1997)

Carnes (1997) observes that a self-portraiture exercise, for example, that explores and validates individual traits and perceptions help to orient young children in their social sphere and provides an opportunity to develop a clear sense of their own physical and emotional identity, which in turn permits them to regard their peers as unique equals.

Activity Duration: a few times during the year with a variation in materials used; about 30-40 minutes depending on difficulty of using the materials. The whole activity may take 2 session days, one for the actual craft making and the other for sharing.

Lesson Objectives:

1. To create a representation of one's self with the use of various art materials
2. To notice and observe one's physical characteristics and those of others
3. To engage in meaningful discussions and enjoyable exchange about differences and similarities while engaged in the project.
4. To show appreciation for one's own and another's physical attributes.

Materials Needed:

Choose what you feel your students will need in constructing an art representation of themselves. You may use clay in one session. In another, you may use people cut outs and cloth material. Engage students in a few of these activities throughout the year. Some materials may include:

Part Three, Section Two: Self Portraits

Washable paint or crayons in multicultural and regular colors

Multicultural people cut outs or make your own using paper of different shades of brown

Yarn or other material that can represent hair (again, making sure to pick colors that closely resemble children's hair)

Cloth material for clothes (parents may be able to help their own child bring materials that may represent cultural wear)

Play-doh (multicultural colors represented as well as regular color for use on clothes etc.)

Procedure:

Day 1

You may want to reread one of the books about ethnicity and cultural differences and similarities. The students may choose a favorite for you to reread. Revisit the chart on body parts and attributes from the previous lesson and go over the students' observations again. Remind the children of their previous insights and hopefully their appreciation of their own physical attributes as well as those of others. Practice the more accurate word descriptions that were learned from the previous lesson (e.g. words the children used to describe color other than black, white, or brown)

Have the children create a representation of them using the materials the teacher has selected for this particular session. While working, ask the students questions about their selection of particular colors or materials to represent themselves.

Day 2

On the second day, gather the students around in a circle with their finished representation. Have each student stand up and show their work and say one thing they really like of all their physical attributes (e.g. I really like my black, straight hair). After she/he shares, have a couple of volunteer students say what they like about the child's physical attributes. Do this for each child in the circle.

Close up the session by designating a wall or window in the class where all the self-portraits could be up on display for a certain amount of time. Have the students look at the display and say one word that they feel about the way they look.



Multicultural family finger puppets by Lisa Stevens
licensed under Creative Commons

Part Three, Section Two: Who Am I?

Idea adapted and developed from Carnes (1997)

Activity Duration: 30 minutes

Lesson Objectives:

1. To use what students have learned about each other's physical attributes
2. To provide a fun, guessing activity.
3. To use alternative profiles for each member of the class.

Materials Needed:

Photos of students back (focused on head and shoulders) and hands taken and printed out before the activity

Procedure:

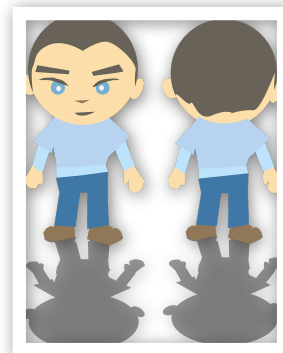
Give each student a picture of somebody else's back and instruct him or her to find this person in the room. Give them about one minute to do this and then get back in the circle. Have each child show the picture they have and say who they identified it to be. Do the same for the pictures of the back of their hands.

After the activity, process the students' experiences by asking the following questions:

1. What made it easy to guess who the person in the picture is?
2. What made it difficult?
3. If I ask you to describe your friend, what words would you use?
4. If I ask your friends to describe you, what words would you like them to use?

Let the sharing flow freely. See where the students are ready in terms of describing each other. Are they ready to use words that go beyond physical attributes?

Hang up these pictures under the self-portraits that the students have created in the previous lesson. Notice with the children the uniqueness in the way each child looks from their self-portraits and their photographs making sure to affirm the beauty in this diversity.



Section Three:

Activities that introduce the beauty of different cultures and traditions, encourage interest, and promote respect

“For children, diversity needs to be real and not merely relegated to learning the names of the usual suspects during Black History Month or enjoying south-of-the-border cuisine on Cinco de Mayo. It means talking to and spending time with kids not like them so that they may discover those kids are in fact just like them.”

– John Ridley

Part Three, Section Three: What's In A Name?

Activity 1: What's In A Name?

Idea Adapted and Developed from Kirmani (2007)

Duration: 5 minutes per child, with presentations broken up over a span of several days depending on how many names can be presented within a portion of the day

Lesson Objectives:

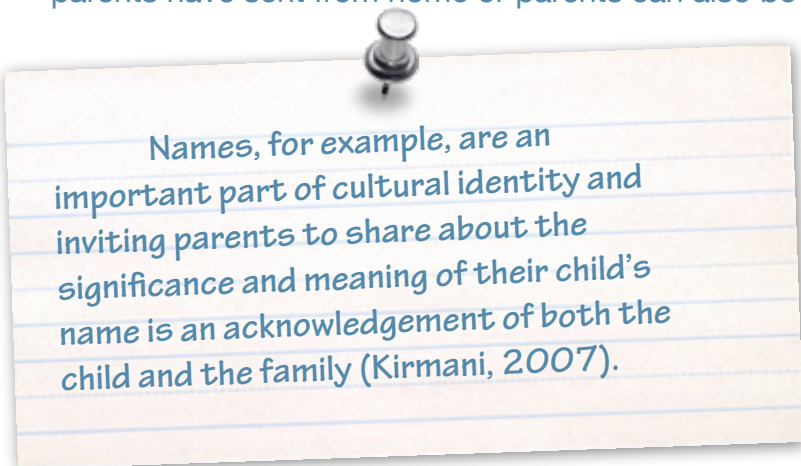
1. To create a family project to share with the class
2. To talk about our names and what they mean
3. To become aware of the significance of one's own and other people's name

Procedure:

This activity can be done towards the beginning of the year when the class is new and children are trying to learn each other's names. It may also be done towards the middle part of the year when the teacher feels that younger students feel more at ease with talking and sharing in front of the class. Teachers should fit this activity in depending on when they feel it will be most appropriate and beneficial.

Teachers can send home a letter with instructions on this family project a week or so before the students are to bring their name poster to class. There is a family letter following this lesson to send home for instructions. This is a template and can be modified however way it would better suit the needs of the class. It is important for the teacher to note that some families may not be fluent in English so a translation of this letter would be helpful to have as well.

When the students bring their name poster back, the teacher can set aside time to have a few children share about the meaning of their names. He/She can help them out using notes that parents have sent from home or parents can also be invited to come in and help their child share about the meaning of their name.



Names, for example, are an important part of cultural identity and inviting parents to share about the significance and meaning of their child's name is an acknowledgement of both the child and the family (Kirmani, 2007).



What's in a name by Jack Dorsey licensed under Creative Commons

The teacher should try to finish the entire name sharing within two weeks. Again, find a special place to hang the name posters inside the classroom, possibly under the children's self-portraits. Whenever possible, teacher should go back and refer to the names and the portraits, to positively affirm each student and who they are.

Part Three, Section Three: What's In A Name?

Family Project
What's In A Name?
Sample Letter

Dear Family,

We are learning about one another's name in our class and we would like to ask for your help in this endeavor. We would like to get to know every person in our classroom and honor the unique person that each student is. We believe that one of the ways that we tell our stories is through the name that our parents chose for us.

On construction paper, write or print your child's name. Around it, put decorations or pictures that signify the meaning of his or her name. You may also include ethnic or cultural origins, who the child is named after, any history, event, person, or members of the family that inspired the name, a meaning in another language, or any other significance you can think of.

For example, my first name is Romina. My parents named me after my father, Romy. My ethnicity is Filipino and Romina is a name that is known in the Philippines. However, I grew up by my nickname, "Minnie" which means "beloved." Growing up, I loved Minnie Mouse because I thought it was so cool that a famous character had the same name as me. My poster will reflect my name written in big font in the middle and all the other significance I mentioned placed around it in a creative way - with pictures, words, illustrations, etc.

You can send in additional information so I can help your child share the meaning of their name as they show their poster to the class. You are also invited to come in if you wish to be part of your child's sharing.

The class and I look forward to your sharing!

Sincerely,

Your Child's Teacher

It's A Small World After All

Part Three, Section Three: Traditions and Practices Around The World



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Activity 2: Traditions And Practices From Around the World

Duration: Several times throughout the year, as the schedule and curriculum permits, about 20-30 minutes each time

Lesson Objectives:

1. To introduce a particular tradition or practice from a student's culture
2. To invite and hear a sharing from a family or community member
3. To try something new

Procedure:

Again, this activity will require advanced planning on the part of the teacher. It involves invitations to family and community members to come in and share with the class. A sample invitation letter follows this activity that can be modified and translated before sending out to the students' families. A calendar with designated slots for family members to sign up would be helpful to organize sessions on traditions and practices. The teacher can decide how often throughout the year he/she would like for this lesson to occur in the classroom. A factor that might help determine this can be the response garnered from the students' families and community members.

It's A Small World After All

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Once a volunteer sharer is identified, the teacher can coordinate with the volunteer about the topic of the sharing which can be anything from a particular culture that falls under these broad categories:

Clothing

Language

Showing Respect in a culture (e.g. kissing the hand of elders among Filipinos, taking off shoes or foot wear with Japanese, etc.)

Food

Art

Music

Stories (they can tell or read a story that is a legend or folk tale or anything that would introduce the students to the particular culture they are sharing about).

Photographs

The format of the 20-30 minutes could be as follows:

- 2-5 mins. Introduction of the sharer and the culture and which part of the world it comes from
- 10-15 mins. Presentation of the particular tradition/ feature of the culture/ read-aloud of a story, etc.
- 5-10 mins Questions and answers from the students

It would be a good idea to have the students create a class-made thank you card ahead of time to show their appreciation for the guest and the presentation.



Swirling Skirts by Peggy2012CREATIVELENZ licensed under Creative Commons



Sev Puri by Kirti Podar licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic

It's A Small World After All

Part Three, Section Three: Traditions and Practices Around The World

Section Three: Traditions And Practices From Around the World Sample Invitation Letter

Dear Family,

We are privileged to attend school in a highly diverse area where there is a variety of languages, food, culture, and traditions. As your child's teacher, I would like to show my students an awareness and appreciation of the diversity around them. An idea I have is to invite you, or members of your family, to share a part of your culture or family tradition that can introduce our class to an experience that is unique and new.

It is therefore with pleasure that I invite you or any member of your family to visit our classroom for half an hour to take part in this cultural share. This can be as simple as a folk tale or a favorite family story that you can read to the class, showing the class photos, family mementos, music or songs, traditional clothing, teaching us a few words from another language, having us taste traditional food (with consideration for allergies and district policies), showing us some art, or any other thing that will showcase the richness of your family or culture.

The format of the 20-30 minutes could be as follows:

2-5 minutes	Introduction of the sharer and the culture and which part of the world it comes from
10-15 minutes	Presentation of the particular tradition/ feature of the culture/ read-aloud of a story, etc.
5-10 minutes	Questions from the students

Please let me know if this is something you would be interested in doing for our class so we can agree on the time and date. We are very excited to get to know things beyond our classroom and we know that our families and community is a wonderful resource for this. We hope that you will support this endeavor.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Your Child's Teacher

Part Three, Section Three: It's Time To Celebrate!



Seattle-Korean cultural celebration dancers by Joe Mabel licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported



Pohela Boishakh by Niloy licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.5 Generic license

Activity 3: It's Time To Celebrate!

Duration: 45-60 mins, several times throughout the year

*It is important for teacher to plan the celebrations and holidays that he/she would want to include in the list of holiday celebrations for the year. For a class that is situated, for example, on the US-Mexico border, the inclusion of the 16th of September, Day of the Dead, and Cinco de Mayo may be good options to include in addition to the US holiday celebrations that are recognized during the school year. For a school in the city of Fremont in Northern California where there is quite a big number of Asian students attending school, an inclusion of Diwali and the Chinese New Year in the celebrations would add to the richness of classroom cultural awareness. A good resource book to have in planning these celebrations, in addition to the particular school context, is *Planning To Change The World*, a resource plan book for teachers (<http://www.justiceplanbook.com>) as well as diversity calendars on teacher websites (<http://kidworldcitizen.org>).*

Lesson Objectives:

1. To become aware of celebrations and holidays in addition to the US holidays we celebrate.
2. To show an appreciation for celebrations from other cultures and affirm the ones that students are familiar with from their own culture.

Part Three, Section Three: It's Time To Celebrate!

Procedure:

The teacher identifies the celebrations to be included and plans ahead with invitations for family participation. He/she and other volunteers can help with set-up and what needs to be included in the actual celebration such as food (be aware of allergies!), customs and practices, etc. If a speaker is coming in to talk about the holiday/celebration, have him or her prepare the following points to show/discuss with the students ahead of time, keeping in mind that these are very young children and will have shorter attention spans and will be more interested in visual and sound images than just talking. Encourage speakers to bring books, pictures, videos, music, etc. to help him or her bring the essence of the celebration to the very young audience.

Questions To Guide Speakers:

1. What is this celebration about?
2. What culture/country did this celebration originate from?
3. What are the different customs/traditions that are done on this day/celebration?
4. What is the importance of this holiday/celebration?

After the presentation, make sure to have the students who do celebrate this holiday share what they know or what they do during this celebration. Allow for time for students to sample food (if it was brought), music, and other traditions. A simple craft can also be a good way to cap the celebration.

The next day, find some time to de-brief by asking students the following questions:

1. What new thing did you learn from our activity yesterday?
2. What other things would you like to find out about yesterday's topic?



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