

ED590 Diversity
Capstone
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I agree with Dr. Rosado's opinion that we as humans discriminate or pre-judge others based on ignorance or limited knowledge of those different than ourselves (Rosado). As a student teacher, it is my duty to acknowledge this tendency in my students and to develop methods to overcome it in my classroom. Furthermore, I must be aware of the cultural differences myself and be able to use diversity as a life learning tool in the classroom.

THE ISSUE

“Even in classrooms in which all the students are white, issues of diversity arise and need to be considered” (Indiana University). As traditional forms of discrimination (race primarily) are absent from our school, socio-economic status becomes the perceived line which divides students. The demographic composition of small, rural Oakridge ranges from upper middle-class to very poor. I have observed students from the middle-class socializing together, excluding the poorer students who become outcasts because of their appearance, social manners and in some cases, family life. Many of the poor students then befriend each other, yet many remain friendless either because of lack of basic socialization skills or poor self image that hold them back from trying to make friends.

There are numerous ways in which I as a teacher can promote the equity and affirm the dignity and self worth of all students.

- **Encourage community involvement**
- **Cooperative learning opportunities**
- **Be aware of different types of learners**
- **Be knowledgeable of State and Federal Regulations on Discrimination**
- **Provide consistent and equitable classroom rules**

ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The Oakridge School District is working to overcome this socio-economic division by planning community events that bring families together such as community information fairs, the Family Resource Center, homework clubs and more community functions as a result of a 21st Century Learning Center grant awarded to our district. I believe that by being involved in these community events, and by encouraging my students to attend, I can become more familiar with my students' family life in their respective cultural context.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

One way to achieve the goal of equity and acknowledgement of cultural diversity is to develop a system of cooperative learning in the classroom. By grouping diverse students together for class

assignments and activities, I hope to provide an environment that promotes peer coaching between students. My challenge is to create situations and lessons where two culturally diverse students can learn from and teach each other in different ways. In addition, I can provide activities for larger groupings with specific roles for each student. Hopefully, by providing a venue for constructive social interaction, some cultural barriers can be brought down with the eventual goal of tolerance and mutual respect. I also am working to discover adults from within the community who are culturally diverse and willing to come to my classroom to bring diversity to my students.

BE AWARE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF LEARNERS

“Effective teaching usually combines several approaches, or multi-sensory instruction, so the child uses more than one sense at a time while learning” (Setley).

To meet the needs of *all* students, I need to take into consideration the different ways students learn. As an educator, I need to provide opportunities to meet the needs of kinesthetic, auditory and visual learners. Furthermore, by using a combination of learning style approaches, I hope to ensure that all students are impacted by one or more methods.

By the very nature of technology class, students are exposed to hands on learning at every turn. Having vocational and technology workstations allows all students to learn about technology by touching, feeling and manipulating machinery and actually witnessing a planned outcome rather than just reading about it. This is especially meaningful to the students who are predominantly kinesthetic learners. For example, one student made a meaningful connection to technology when he was able to make a designed shape on a computer controlled lathe. This lesson was exciting for a student whose visual and auditory learning skills are not his strengths.

As a student teacher, I believe one of my fundamental roles is to constantly and consistently promote life-long learning in my classroom. One way I can achieve this goal for my students is to provide specific verbal cues, directions and praise. Throughout keyboarding lessons each day, I make personal contact with all my students individually and give them specific verbal instructions regarding keyboarding goals (such as correct posture, feet flat on the floor, eyes on the screen) and classroom behavior expectations (such as staying on task and respecting other's learning). By consistently giving these verbal reminders, all students, especially the auditory learners, are developing good keyboarding habits and appropriate classroom behaviors. Realizing that using verbal cues may not be meeting the needs of non-auditory learners, I have decided to place signs and pictures around the computers and the classroom to remind students of lab rules, class procedures and correct keyboarding.

To promote the success of the visual learner in my technology class, students are given daily opportunities to read and follow a sequence of written instructions. This is especially crucial with the vocational/technology workstations. In order for the students to successfully complete assignments, they must have the ability to read and follow instructions from a self-paced workbook. This method of learning poses a challenge to the teacher of learners with varied reading abilities. To accommodate all learners, I will pair students at workstations based on

diverse reading abilities thereby allowing a high reader to tutor a low reader. I believe this teaching strategy will ensure the success of non-visual learners in the classroom.

BE KNOWLEDGEABLE OF STATE AND FEDERAL LAWS ON DISCRIMINATION

With respect to gender equality and racial justice, I need to be knowledgeable of state and federal laws regarding discrimination. In a recent discrimination workshop, these questions were asked to provide a self-check of inappropriate and possibly unlawful teacher/student interactions (TSPC).

1. Do I use male pronouns or masculine references to the exclusion of female references?
2. Do I maintain eye contact, smile or stand close to some students more than others based on race, sex, religion or national origin?
3. Do I use the same type of disciplinary measures regardless of the above categories?

I feel that these questions are a good place to start for the beginning teacher's constant need for self-evaluation in areas of gender and racial discrimination.

PROVIDE CONSISTENT AND EQUITABLE CLASSROOM RULES

Consistent classroom rules and procedures are essential in providing an environment where all students can succeed. All students need to be given clear directions and guidelines regarding expectations in the classroom. My challenge as an educator is to implement these rules and procedures while still meeting individual needs of the diverse student. For example, one of my students has difficulty staying on task and being respectful of others' learning. After numerous reminders, discussions and parent-teacher conferences, he is now more successful in an assigned seat rather than a seat of his choice. In addition, by following the classroom rules, the student may earn the privilege to choose his own seat on Fridays, which is a special reward day for the entire class. Another student in the class is an extremely social person and has difficulty with continued outbursts and disruptions. I felt this student was beginning to dislike tech class and I wanted to quickly facilitate a change in her attitude. As a very bright student, I decided to engage her in a peer teaching role in the classroom. Now, she is excited and very willing to help other students with their projects and has become more successful as a learner in the classroom. I feel proud that I have helped this student focus her need for social interaction in a more successful way.

“To adequately attend to cultural diversity in the classroom, teachers must look first at their own cultural background and understand how their biases affect their interactions with students” (Indiana University). Ultimately, I must learn all that I can about my students' cultural backgrounds, family life and feelings about school and education in order to meet their individual needs. Furthermore, in order to develop non-discriminatory communication between students, I can provide a learning environment that promotes cooperative groups and peer coaching. With these teaching strategies in place and by individualizing behavior management plans for each student, I can promote equity and affirm the dignity and worth of *all* students in my classroom.

REFERENCES

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