

Embracing Diversity to Promote Positive and Effective Learning Environments (Both Online and In-Person)

Lipscomb University – College of Education

Ignite: Get Switched On to Technology Conference

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Ground Rules and Expectations

- Promote respect and inclusion of all contributions
- Maintain an open mind
- Listen carefully
- Discussion should be informative and thoughtful
- Understand that this is a sensitive topic that makes some individuals very uncomfortable
- Make every attempt not to generalize
- Do not “monopolize” the conversation

Your assumptions are your windows on the world. Scrub them off every once in a while, or the light won't come in. – Isaac Asimov

Are you willing to be uncomfortable?

If someone is able to show me that what I think or do is not right, I will happily change, for I seek the truth, by which no one was ever truly harmed. It is the person who continues in his self-deception and ignorance who is harmed. – Marcus Aurelius

Session Objective(s)

- Discuss the need of being culturally aware and its impact on promoting positive and effective learning environments

Tennessee

- According to World Population Review,
 - Total Population 2021 – 6,944,260
 - White – 77.58%
 - Black or African American – 16.76%
 - Two or more races – 2.20%
 - Asian – 1.75%
 - Other races – 1.38%
 - Native American – 0.27%
 - Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander – 0.06%
- 10th largest population of African American residents in the nation
- Over 36% of the population under the age of 1 are minorities
- Rank 37th out of 50 states for Asian American population

Cultural Diversity is...

- An awareness that no two students are the same
- A group of diverse individuals from different cultures or societies
- Diversity spectrum
 - Language
 - Religion
 - Race
 - Ethnicity
 - Sexual orientation
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Economic

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CULTURALLY AWARE?

No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive. – Mahatma Gandhi

Fostering Cultural Awareness

- Show all students that you care
- Be aware that just because students share the same race does not mean they share the same experience
- Understand that cultural experiences influence students' perceptions and behaviors
- Express a genuine interest in diversity issues
- Demonstrate consistent expectations for all students
- Include culturally relevant teaching pedagogical practices (bridging students home culture with school culture)
- Ensure the curriculum is reflected of the diverse world

The Importance of Embracing Diversity in the Classrooms

- Creates an inclusive environment and multicultural awareness that benefits all students
- Prepares students to be more tolerable and accepting of people from different backgrounds
- Creates an equitable learning environment where all students can maximize their full potential
- Eliminates the barriers that often hinder marginalized students from learning
- Closes the historical academic achievement gap

Embracing Diversity Begins with YOU

- Learning about yourself and self-identity
 - Who makes up your inner circle?
 - What stereotypes do you have of people from a different culture?
 - Do you tend to stay in your comfort zone?
 - What are your core values and beliefs?
- Having a growth mindset
- Asking open-ended questions
- **Empathy vs. Sympathy**
- **Being reflective practitioners**

Let's see the difference

*Empathy fuels connection.
Sympathy drives
disconnection.* -Brené Brown

Empathy

- The ability to understand and share the feelings of another.
- The failure to demonstrate empathy is not truly understanding others and forcing your agenda on them.
- Emotionally connects people.

Sympathy

- Feelings of pity and sorrow for someone else's misfortune.
- You can feel sorry for others but that does not help others to feel understood or empowered.
- Lacks emotional connection.

Reflective Practice

- Being intentional and conscious about thinking or reflecting on what you do
- Learning from prior experience: thinking about what you did, how did you respond, what did you say
- Deciding on what you would do differently next time
- Thompson (2015) outlined the following steps:
 1. **Read** on specific topics where you are seeking growth
 2. **Ask** others about how they do things and why
 3. **Watch** what is happening all around you
 4. **Feel** your emotions and what prompts them, even the negative ones
 5. **Talk** about your views and experiences with others to gain insight
 6. **Think** about how you are spending time to do your work

References

- Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms*. Jossey-Bass.
- Muhammad, G. (2020). *Cultivating genius: An equity framework for culturally and historically responsive literacy*. Scholastic.
- Thompson, N. (2015). *People skills* (4th ed.). Red Globe Press.

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