Beyond Color Blindness: Effective Instructional Strategies for 'Culture-Sensitive' Classrooms

4/23/2014

Discussion will explore creating classrooms...

- where all ethnic groups are valued and respected
- that use culture to form the foundation for improved understanding of the contributions of varied groups to society's social and historical progress;
- that integrate the dynamic mix of race, ethnicity, class, gender, religion, and family that contributes to every student's cultural identity.

Elephant in the room
Colorblindness is...

- The racial ideology that suggests the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals across cultures as equally as possible without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity.
- Colorblindness is a form of racism.


Colorblindness is not a panacea

- Expression by educators that 'I am color blind' or 'I see all my students the same' indicates that the culture, experience, and historical legacy of students of color is:
  - Negated
  - Disregarded
  - Dismissed
  - Ignored

Source: @ Lawson-Davis, 2014.
### Important Terms

**EVERY**

**‘Race-Sensitive’ Educator Should Know**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term/phrase</th>
<th>Definition/Source</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation</td>
<td>Process in which members of one cultural group adopt the beliefs, norms &amp; traditions of another group (forgoing or leaving behind their own cultural legacy)</td>
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<td>Code Switching</td>
<td>Shifting or mixing different patterns of speech in conversation, reflective changes in expression patterns/morphing between different cultural and linguistic spaces and different parts of our own identities (<a href="http://www.epog.org/topic/identity">http://www.epog.org/topic/identity</a>)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural Mismatch</td>
<td>Variance or difference between values, norms, traditions of teachers (or other authoritative figure) and students (or subcultural group)</td>
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<td>Disproportionality</td>
<td>Over- or under-representation of a particular group within a particular group or system. This condition creates disparities and inequities that cannot be corrected or remedied until recognition of underlying cause is addressed.</td>
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| Micro-aggressions | The brief and everyday slights, insults, indignities, and demeaning messages sent to people by sometimes well-intentioned White people who are unaware of the hidden messages being communicated. See:  
| Mirror books | Books reflecting images and experiences of all cultural groups. Demonstrated to improve student well-being of children and adolescents validating their being/valuing among the wider group. See:  

Daily challenges faced by diverse gifted students:

- Low expectations; discriminatory classroom environments
- Classroom teachers with limited cultural understandings/cultural mismatch
- Challenges accessing high end curriculum/special programs

School Counselors who do not fairly and equitably Advise/Guide students into high level coursework; inform students of support services

- Fitting in; Denial of Cultural Legacy; retention in services
- Feelings of isolation; not feeling welcome
- Sense of not belonging; duality of peer groups
• Being the only 'one' in a group with different interests, different motivations

• Lack of exposure to enriching opportunities early and consistently

• Challenged by a society that portrays diverse youths as aberrant, destined to fail & disrupt instead of succeed & contribute

Linking culturally responsive pedagogy to retention and success of culturally diverse gifted students

• There is great need to identify effective ways to prepare teachers who will implement culturally responsive practices that will engage and motivate all children while allowing and encouraging those children to affirm their cultural identity in a positive manner

• An equally important area is the need to identify effective ways to alter attitudes of teachers so that they are willing to reflect upon and change as appropriate their long-held views about teaching, culture, and learning
Ensuring Rigor across the curriculum/across cultures

Shared strengths of culturally diverse gifted learners (Davis, J.L., 2012)
- High Verbal ability: Fluency & elaboration expressed in writing, speaking
- Situational, pragmatic problem solvers/demonstrating practical intelligence
- Visual/Spatial Strengths
- Flourish in hands-on learning environments
- Energetic, versatile, able to function in multiple modalities simultaneously
- Preference for group/familial over individual learning situations

Aligning strengths with instruction (Davis, J.L. 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Instruction Relevance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Verbal, Linguistic</td>
<td>Literary analysis, read-aloud, forensics/deliberation, integration of music with science &amp; mathematics, focus on writing, oral cultural strengths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual/Spatial</td>
<td>STEM content focus, innovative technologies, board games to teach skills, engage across groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flourish in hands-on</td>
<td>Laboratory classrooms, internships, group problem solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environments</td>
<td>experiments</td>
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Aligning Strengths with instruction (Davis, J.L. 2013)

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Facility &amp; ease with use of multiple modalities</th>
<th>Using visual imagery, music, hands-on, integration of technology throughout</th>
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<tr>
<td>Vexatious, Energetic</td>
<td>Flexible grouping, allowing movement during class period</td>
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<tr>
<td>Situational, pragmatic problem solvers</td>
<td>Problem-based learning, using word problems to teach math concepts, cross disciplinary instruction</td>
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In Literary Analysis or Bibliotherapy (Davis, J.L. 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme/Concept</th>
<th>Mirror Book</th>
<th>Suggested Level</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surviving Against the Odds/Cultural Identity</td>
<td>The House on Mango Street by S. Cameron</td>
<td>Pre-Adolescent/Adolescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multigenerational conflicts/inter-family differences</td>
<td>The Joy Luck Club by A. Tan</td>
<td>Adolescent/Young adult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage/Risk-Taking</td>
<td>The Kite Runner by K. Hosokani</td>
<td>Pre-Adolescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual Identity/Peer relationships</td>
<td>The Outsiders Series by W.D. Moyan</td>
<td>Pre-Adolescent/Adolescent</td>
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Culture Sensitive Instructional Ideas
Teaching culture/history/science through PBL (middle school or secondary)

Do the Dry Bones Speak?: A PBL lesson plan

Ill-structured Problem

- An Archaeological dig in the late 1990s unearthed the remains of what appeared to be the remains of Africans buried in a particular lot/area of NYC
- Landowners had made an earlier agreement to sell the property to a realtor ready to build a new high-rise apartment building
- After the dig and discovery, the land deal was halted

Your task: Create a plan for how this discovery can be successfully dealt with to the satisfaction of all parties

Lesson Plan on Resiliency

(Davis, J.L., 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author/Reader</th>
<th>Work to Read/Analyze</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Langston Hughes</td>
<td>'A Dream Deferred'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tupac Shakur</td>
<td>'A Rose That Grew from Concrete'</td>
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• What do these works of literature have in common?
• What metaphors do the authors use?
• Under what conditions/during what time periods did the authors write?
• What impact did the time period have on their writing?

Emotional resilience

- The Traits, Benefits and Development of Emotional Resilience
- Emotional Resilience Is a Trait You Can Develop
  By Elizabeth Scott, M.S.

http://stress.about.com/od/understandingstress/a/resilience.htm

Other options

- Choice 1: Read King's 'Letter from the Birmingham Jail'- select three specific passages and define in our own words what Dr. King's advice to readers meant during the civil rights movement. Discuss the impact of his advice today.
- Choice 2: Choose a famous figure from history, write them a letter commending/thanking them for their resilience and what you have learned from them.
- Choice 3: How are you emotionally resilient? Write a poem or a personal essay in which you explore and identify your emotional resilience.
The rose that grew from concrete
Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete? Proving nature's law is wrong it learned to walk with out having feet. Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air. Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else ever cared.
- by Tupac Shakur, 1992

A dream deferred
What happens to a dream deferred?
Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore and then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over like a syrupy sweet?
Maybe it just sag like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?
- Langston Hughes, 1951

Ethnomathematics
- Intersection of culture, historical traditions, sociocultural roots and mathematics. Good acknowledge cultural systems and frameworks that have existed since the beginning of time.

- The term "ethnomathematics" was introduced by the Brazilian educator and mathematician Ubiratan D'Ambrosio in 1997.


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Ron Eglash: Contemporary ethno-mathematician

- Fractals at the heart of African design - in architecture, art, and hair braiding... all based on fractal designs.
- http://www.ted.com/talks/ron_Eglash_on_african_fractals

Fractals in African hair braiding

Strategy Games across Cultures

**Mancala:** Over 3,000 years old, Wari or Mancala - Oldest known ancient strategy game in Africa, perhaps in the world of this type (700 BC); usually involves 2 rows of 6 holes each (or more advanced board with 4 rows/8 holes) challenges players to gather more stones than their opponent. Mancala was little-known in Europe and America until relatively recently. A report from the Smithsonian Institute described it as the "national game of Africa."
10 most important board games in History

- **The Landlord's game**: predated Monopoly - Intended to demonstrate social injustices acted upon communities living in poverty. (Designed by Lizzie Magie, MD actress)
- **Senet**: Oldest board game known to exist; four were found in Tutankhamen's tomb (3500 BC)
- **Chaupati**: Game of India, closely-related to the game of Pachisi

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Comprehensive Model for Culturally Diverse Gifted Learners (Dunn, 2014)

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Q&A

Thank you!!

Contact info:
Dr. Joy Lawson Davis
projoy2012@gmail.com
www.WeAreGiftedt.blogspot.com