

Cross Cultural Paper

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Teaching Diverse Learners

12-4-11



The opportunity to be apart of the programming for People's City Mission's club EDEFY was a great experience. It was a blessing to get to know some of the children in the Lincoln community and gain a better understanding of how poverty affects kids and how important it is to reach out and help those in need. There were several specific things I learned while at People's City Mission and need to remember for my own classroom. Many of the children are separated from individuals in there family which you can see causes stress on them. Sometimes their physical needs are not always met which include but are not limited to: food, clothes, health, extremes (obesity/starving). Many are lacking in attention while many are receiving the wrong kind of attention and it came out when they were around individuals that could and would give them the attention they desired. Some of the things the children struggled with were sharing, teamwork, patience and sometimes learned helplessness. There are so many different types of families. Some have mothers or fathers that cannot speak English well. Others have to take care of siblings at really young ages. We even saw some mothers that had been abused. Many of the students were difficult to understand, even though English is there first language. If there parents' language is not English they cannot hear and repeat the words as often as other children putting them farther behind in word development. Ultimately they are still just kids who want to be kids.

All the kids were kind and loving if given the opportunity. After one day we had a young boy ask us to pray for him because he could not control his temper due to his anger problems. It was amazing to see how he recognized the problems he had and his incredible faith in the power of prayer at such a young age. Another young boy offered to pray at the end of our time together and the kind things he said made it all worth it. The love that young man showed us through his pray made all the hard times seem so minuscule. So many of them really do have a strong faith.

Creating a variety of lesson plans for many different situations over several classes has added an in depth perspective for me on teaching for a wide variety of students. These different situations opened my eyes to how I want to approach teaching in the future and I now have the tools to learn and understand students from a variety of cultures and races that I may encounter in my future teaching career.

I also had the opportunity to be apart of a poverty simulation at Concordia. There are things put in place to help those in poverty but there are also so many hoops people have to jump through to access those benefits. The simulation showed me that those who surround you can make a big difference. If you have support from those around you and your community, even if that means a car ride or some food, it can make all the difference. There are many contributing and helping those in need but more can be done and it doesn't take much. Even the smallest things can make the biggest difference. For individuals in poverty there is a great deal less quality time spent as a whole family. The elderly may not get the care they need, and child care is very hard to come by. Many individuals in poverty actually work very hard, which is contrary to the stereo type that they are lazy. People in poverty have many obstacles to overcome.

His Kids Camp was a weekend I will always remember and hope to be a part of again someday. This camp for individuals with special needs of all ages is such an incredible ministry that has been established. There was so much love. The campers have the opportunity to be with people like themselves experiencing independence away form home and having fun. The volunteers learn so much, not only about those with disabilities but about themselves.

I have had the opportunity to be a part of / volunteer at Autism Speaks and the Down syndrome walk in Lincoln, Nebraska. Both of these events have shown me how things are

changing for the better. Families are uniting to support one another as they continue to make the lives of their children and other loved ones the best it can be. The children and adults with Down syndrome and Autism are so wonderful and so full of love. Although it can be difficult, I truly feel they are a blessing to all the lives they touch.

When looking at all of these experiences and connecting them with Bank's Theory, I have discovered that what multicultural education really means and the many different faces it can take. As Bank says, "Multicultural education is one that promotes the freedom, abilities and skills to cross ethnic and cultural boundaries to participate in other cultures and groups... an education for freedom". We must help students realize both academic excellence and cultural excellence. Banks defines "cultural excellence" in terms of students' knowledge of their own cultural backgrounds and initiation in the studies of the differing cultural backgrounds of their peers. As part of this cultural self-knowledge, students develop the skills to express and act on the answers to the following questions: Who am I? Where have I been? What do I hope to do? The answers to these questions—or at least reflections on them—help students function in their own world, as well as in the larger community.

Bank also tells of a *paradigm shift* which is a change of perspective on subject content and instructional authority. As Bank's states, "The teacher needs to understand the nature of knowledge and to understand that knowledge is a process" (quoted in Lockwood 1992, p. 26). He focuses on teachers assisting students in raising questions so they can investigate the perspectives of different cultural groups. This is something that I have always found important. If students do not know the questions to ask or have the ability to formulate them on their own they are limited in their ability to advance. He also notes that inherently no teacher (or student), however knowledgeable, can know all the answers.

Since we live in such a diverse and rapidly changing world we, as educators, need to approach our students preparing them for what lies ahead. We must nurture our students' hearts as well as their minds.

