

Considering EVERYTHING we have studied about issues related to diversity, what have you learned in Ed Psych and how will you use it in your classroom?

After studying diversity in class, my eyes were opened a bit to see past the Midwest-Caucasian-Medium-to-High-Income world I live in. After watching Jane Elliott and her classroom of third graders, the world as I knew it changed. That may sound dramatic but the experiment she conducted with her third graders, as well as the prison workers, brought a significant issue to light. Ignoring that discrimination exists, or not even discussing it in the classroom, is just as detrimental as being discriminatory. Ignoring culture leads to marginalization which leads to alienation which finally leads to resistance; resistance from students, parents, and faculty. However, how to teach diversity and have a “full bucket” approach is the underlying issue.

An important thing to remember in my classroom is that there are more types of diversity than just race. Students can differ in intelligence, gender, ethnicity, culture, upbringing, and social class. Even in a Midwest-Caucasian-Medium-to-High-Income classroom, the students will still be completely separate individuals. The differences in my students will be because of the culture they grow up in. Culture is traditions, behaviors, languages, foods, and other shared customs passed down from generation to generation. As a teacher, I will need to understand these concepts to make a positive microculture for my own classroom.

To begin, I will need to discover the cultures that make up my students and from there I will discuss the ways we are diverse. To learn each student’s culture, a big part is being involved with the parents; such as in class when we went on a “home visit.” This experiment is an excellent example of discovering culture. From one home visit, an approximation of the student’s parental expectations, socio-economic beliefs, beliefs of school, upbringing, and

ethnicity could be learned. Of course, this is just an approximation. As a teacher I can take in my surroundings and make assumptions at these differences, but they must be a loose guess, willing to change as I get to know my student's better. These assumptions, as well as the eventual outcome to the culture of the student, are all factors that affect student achievement.

As I mentioned before, in my classroom, these differences will make a "full bucket" in my classroom. By "full bucket," I mean these differences will be seen as an advantage to the class. More differences mean a variety of experiences to share and learn from. To highlight these differences, I will help students to value their own culture. This may be as simple as sharing differences about holidays or traditions. The classroom (even though I want to be a high school teacher) can be decorated and filled with culturally diverse bulletin boards, posters, and artwork. As an English teacher, diversity could be very simply brought up in the literature we are reading. By choosing texts and novels that highlight differences, and the importance of these differences, may be a way to bring the class into a discussion about diversity.

The most important aspect of diversity, I believe, is not only embracing it but being completely intolerant of bias, slurs, or "jokes" about differences. I'm not planning on having a "politically correct classroom" where people will be afraid to talk about differences, but it will be done in a respectful manner. Ultimately, I believe this was the goal of Jane Elliott and her students; the goal to have a "full bucket" world where our differences make a more interesting world. A world where stereotypes are not stagnant but are rather a starting point to discovering the individuality of each person and their culture. This, too, will be the goal of my classroom.