

## Diversity Reflection Essay

**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?**

It is impossible to prepare for a career in education and ignore student diversity. Students differ from one another in a plethora of ways, including, but not limited to, ethnicity, culture, social class, intelligence, learning style, and home language. Throughout our discussions of student diversity, it becomes apparent that in order to have a successful classroom, a teacher must view diversity as an opportunity and not a hindrance.

First and foremost, teachers should be aware of their actions and make sure that they are in no way promoting prejudice or discrimination in the classroom. This need was evident from the video of Jane Elliot's classroom, in which she intentionally viewed people with a certain eye color as superior. By doing this, she not only led to the devaluation of those with the inferior eye color, but also encouraged her students to pursue those stereotypes. Those with the superior eye color bullied the others, and adapted the teacher's views of their inferiority. By promoting an environment of equal respect for all children and putting an immediate stop to prejudice and discrimination, a classroom can transform into a community of equality.

In class, we also discussed how socio-economic status is perhaps the biggest determinant of student achievement in the classroom. As an educator, it is necessary to recognize the backgrounds from which your students come, and how these factors will affect students' learning. These effects are especially prevalent in students from working-class and lower-class backgrounds. Frequently, students

from these backgrounds enter school without the fundamental skills already obtained by their middle-class peers. These tasks include naming letters, counting, and cutting with scissors. Parents from these homes are also less likely to be involved in their child's schooling. In teaching students from these backgrounds, it becomes necessary to recognize that they are probably not as advanced as their middle-class peers and that you may need to teach them fundamentals that are usually learned in the home. Also, children from these families are likely to have less support at home, so a teacher must provide added support in the school environment, as well as try to recruit the parents to be more involved in their child's education.

Another learning that is especially important when dealing with diverse students is the role of stereotypes in learning about the children in your classroom. While stereotypes are sometimes inaccurate and commonly viewed as negative, they can provide a solid starting point for getting to know your students. Stereotypes can be positive and beneficial in the sense that they provide a foundation upon which you can build with your students. For example, if you have a student that consistently wears Husker football jerseys, a logical starting point in getting to know him would be football. However, stereotypes can be abused when you continue to stick to them beyond initial interactions with students. For example, if you were to learn that the aforementioned student hated football, it would be inconsiderate to continue to pursue the subject. Stereotypes can be beneficial only as they are used as a starting point, and not a continual classification for a student.

A final idea that is especially important in a diverse classroom concerns ethnicity. Because a teacher is more than likely to have students from different racial groups, it is necessary to highlight them all equally. One way this can be done is through the curriculum used. Books should contain pictures of children of all races in equal proportions, use names from all different ethnicities, and have examples including the behaviors and practices of different cultures. For example, we should move away from using names such as “Jack” or “Sally,” and include others such as “Pablo” or “Tyrell.” By doing this, we send the message that we care about our students and where they come from, and promote this attitude among our class.

While there is no end to the examples of how diversity can affect a classroom, I believe that the aforementioned ideas are some of the most important for teachers in diverse classrooms to be aware of. By adopting these ideas, we can view diversity not as a hindrance, but as an opportunity to increase awareness of and respect for people who are different than us. In this way, we can usher our students into an era of decreased prejudice, discrimination, and negative stereotypes.