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Why Culture Matters: The Importance and Effectiveness of Creating a Multicultural Classroom When Teaching Elementary School Students In Public Schools.

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Abstract

The focus of this Capstone Project is to analyze the benefits of having a multicultural classroom in elementary schools. Multicultural education refers to any form of education or teaching that incorporates the histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of people from different cultural backgrounds. Teaching about multiculturalism can increase not only the teacher's knowledge, but also the students' learning. From this Capstone project the researchers learned how some teachers and parents feel about having different cultures being taught in the classroom. Based on the information that is collected the researchers found ways to incorporate multiculturalism. Upon interviewing four elementary teachers at different schools, themes emerged as ways to address the issue presented. Based on the data collected, an action was chosen as the most effective option for establishing the importance of having a multicultural classroom.

Why Culture Matters: The Importance and Effectiveness of Creating a Multicultural Classroom When Teaching Elementary School Students In Public Schools

Everyone has a background story and that story will impact who you become in the future. Growing up in public schools was hard for me because I was bullied based on my looks. The most important experience that impacted me was when I was in fifth grade. I had the biggest crush on a boy named Alexander. He was the boy of my dreams. The only problem was that he was entirely American and I was Mexican. We were completely different. I was tan, brown eyes, with black hair, and he was white, blue eyes, and blond hair. I liked him and just because we looked different made no difference to me but of course this was a problem for him. One day, I decided to send him a note with my best friend asking him whether he liked me or not. I was so excited waiting for him to give the note back but he never did. Probably a week passed by when I saw him with his friends sitting in front of the office. I walked by them to see if he would tell me anything and he did, he shouted at me “I would never like a beaner”. At that moment I had no idea what the term meant so I went home and looked it up. I learned that a “beaner” is a derogatory term used to refer to Mexicans or Mexican-Americans due to the fact they use beans in their cuisine. That day, my heart was broken. I felt like the most unhappiest girl in the world because my first crush ever called me a beaner just because I looked different. He did not know where I came from and that even though I looked different, it did not give him the right to call me a beaner. Yes, I ate beans but using that word toward me hurt me and because of that, I hated eating beans. I disliked the way I looked and where I came from. I did not want to know anything about my culture. I wanted to tell Alexander that he was wrong and he needed to apologize, but I let him believe what he wanted and I started to believe it as well. My whole childhood, I lived asking myself “Who am I” ? Growing up in public schools impacted the way I

viewed myself and others. I saw myself as someone I did not want to be. I did not want to have brown skin and brown eyes and dark hair. My culture was never taught to me. I never knew who I was or where I came from. I remember celebrating Cinco De Mayo but never knew why I would. I disliked all Americans because of Alexander. Thanks to him, I though all Americans thought of me as a beaner.

Now, let's fast forward to better times when I was in High School. When I was seventeen years old, I met my best friend Marissa. She was just like me. Her parents were both from Oaxaca and she was born in the United States. I loved her because she looked just like me and when I told her about Alexander she went up to him and I got the apology I so longed for. One day, she invited me to a Kermes. A Kermes is a fundraising event where Oaxacan people gather together and sell different traditional dishes to raise money for important causes such as medical emergencies or funeral expenses. They also bring different bands and everyone gets to dance and enjoy the music. I had never been to one at that time, but going with Marissa was really important. It taught me alot about my culture. I enjoyed eating Oaxacan food with those beans I hated so much in fifth grade. I enjoyed dancing to the music with live bands. I enjoyed their beautiful colorful clothing. I enjoyed everything I would see. During my Senior year, I got to experience a lot of Oaxacan traditions thanks to Marissa. She would take me to several events and showed me what it meant to be Oaxacan. Today, I know a lot about myself and my family thanks to her teaching me the importance of learning where I come from. I would have enjoyed learning more about myself while going to school and also exploring other cultures, but I am grateful I had a friend who taught me the importance of learning about my culture.

When parents and families fail students, it is important for teachers to fulfill the gaps. Young students need to learn early on that they can not use derogatory words to refer to others. If

teachers have a multicultural classroom, young students will be more accepting, more open, and more tolerant of other people. My culture is personally meaningful to me because growing up, I was never taught about my own or anyone else's culture. I was bullied because I looked a certain way. All of us have a right to know who we are, and where we come from. The stories, people, places of our families are part of a unique story of who we become. Understanding your own history can help build your well being and personal growth, and can also help connect us with each other. There are several benefits to learning about other cultures. It can open up an opportunity to expand our horizons and to remember that there are other ways of viewing the world and perceiving reality. This can also allow us to be open to criticism, as well as being patient and willing to consider other points of view. I believe that an inclusive curriculum helps teachers and students understand different perspectives, appreciate others strengths, and build empathy. Teachers should embrace diversity and foster culturally inclusive classrooms designed to help every student succeed. Teachers can foster cultural awareness and sensitivity in classrooms. They can do so by expressing interest in diversity, remain sensitive to differences, and teach a culturally inclusive curriculum. In the past, American education has tended to center heavily on Western European history and culture and on the stories of white Americans. (Walden University, 2020) Teachers should make a planned effort to teach a broad curriculum that more accurately captures the world in its whole. By doing so, teachers can help guarantee students do not feel as if their culture is unimportant or that their own contributions are not wanted. It will take time for teachers to teach students to love and not judge others by their looks but with time, and the right educational action plan, it is possible to live in a world where we see each other as equal.

Literature Synthesis and Integration: Creating a Positive Multicultural Classroom

California public schools rarely teach students different cultures. Early childhood teachers have a significant influence on children, their families, and ultimately, society is affected by the current lack of attention paid to their cultural identity and belonging. It is important to consider the benefits and drawbacks a multicultural classroom can bring forth within elementary schools. Additionally, the possible solutions to these setbacks must also be explored.

What is the Issue?

Multicultural teaching is something most often brought up in higher grades. Students will learn more about the culture they are being taught in the classroom than their own culture or the cultures surrounding them. In 2011, the FAIR Education Act also known as Senate Bill 48, was signed into law. This law requires that California public schools provide accurate, fair, inclusive, and respectful representations of our diverse ethnic and cultural community in the K-12 grade history and social studies curriculum. Also, this law prohibits instruction or school sponsored activities that promote a discriminatory bias because of race, color, national origin, or ancestry (SB-48, 2011). Although this bill requires schools to represent our diverse ethnic and cultural community, today, many students who have attended public schools their whole life, have very little knowledge of their own culture and the culture that surrounds them. Teachers are not teaching students about their culture. They are teaching students what is written in their history books. Students who have better relationships with peers and teachers and feel a greater sense of relatedness, belongingness, inclusion, and support are more likely to be motivated to engage in learning (Furrer & Skinner, 2003) Correspondingly, having a multicultural classroom, is seen to

be beneficial to students' overall academic success. Nonetheless, there are still several other factors to consider.

The real issue is that students with a minority background are more likely to face ethnic victimization in the form of name-calling, teasing, and social-exclusion from peer groups (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2000). When teachers are able to incorporate culture into their curriculum, they can help guarantee students do not feel as if their culture is unimportant or that their own contributions are not wanted. Therefore, if teachers' curriculums become more inclusive to their students' cultures, they may drastically impact their students' points of views on not only themselves, but also their peers. If we are able to effectively teach our teachers of the importance of a multicultural classroom, students' education will be drastically impacted within this format of education. Consequently the issue is this: While a multicultural classroom may offer benefits to teachers and students, it can represent negative results between the teachers and parents which can significantly impact the students success.

Why is it an Issue?

To understand why creating and maintaining a multicultural classroom is important, one must understand what it is and how this can impact the students' success. Among their numerous roles, teachers act as instructors, disciplinarians, and role models (Furrer & Skinner, 2003). They build guidelines for children's social behavior (Ryan & Patrick, 2001), give explicit messages about their peer interactions, and ideally act as role models in how to engage in respectful communication (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Therefore, teachers have the potential to influence student motivation with how they approach diversity, by promoting or undermining students' sense of relatedness and belonging (Osterman, 2000) to social groups. D. W Sue and Sue's (1990,2008) model can be used to better understand the crucial theoretical framework of

MCC in counseling and related fields (Chao,2012). According to their model, MCC consists of three areas: attitudes and beliefs, which teaches awareness of one's own assumptions, values, and biases, knowledge: which is used in understanding the worldview of culturally diverse clients, and skill: allows us to develop appropriate intervention strategies and techniques (Chao, 2012). For example, in a multicultural environment, teachers may struggle managing all of the students' different cultures that may be present in their classroom which can cause the minority of cultures to feel uncomfortable and even like they are being purposely excluded. Due to the several cultures that may be present in the classroom, negative relationships may be established. Negative relationships such as these can cause teachers great amounts of stress and exhaustion, which can significantly impact the morale and performance of teachers (Claessens et al., 2017).

Furthermore, creating a multicultural classroom is advantageous to students' success. According to Haynes and Emmons, (1907) having a positive school climate impacts the “cognitive, social, psychological, psychoeducational development, and school adjustment of students” (p. 322-323). Cadima and Burchinal (2010) stress the importance for young students to receive tenderness and affection from their teachers. In addition, Cadima and Burchinal, emphasize that relationships such as these are “critical for later academic achievement” (Cadima and Burchinal, 2010, p. 458) To conclude, racial and ethnic identity development is a personal process of moving from unawareness of racial and ethnic differences toward awareness (Phinney, 1992).

There is a cultural gap that exists between many teachers and the students they are responsible for teaching. “Historically, despite the prevalence of White cultural norms in society prior to school desegregation mandated in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954, African American students attended schools with teachers who promoted the social uplift of

African American people and celebrated their culture in the school curriculum (Hall, Quinn and Gollnick, 2018, p. 296).” Hall, Quinn and Gollnick (2018) believe that because of the influence and instructional methods of Black teachers on the educational experiences of their students, African American schoolchildren were able to close various gaps (e.g., the literacy gap, the elementary school attendance gap, and the high school completion gap) between themselves and their White counterparts. According to the US Department of Education (2013), racial demographic trends indicate that the U.S. teaching force has remained consistent over the past three decades. The table in figure one, illustrates the racial demographics of teachers from 1987 to 2012.

Figure 1:

Percent of teachers in public elementary and secondary schools from years 1987-2012.

Race/ethnicity	Percentage distribution of teachers						
	1987–1988	1990–1991	1993–1994	1999–2000	2003–2004	2007–2008	2011–2012
White	86.9	86.5	86.5	84.3	83.1	83.1	81.9
Black	8.2	8.3	7.4	7.6	7.0	7.0	6.8
Hispanic	3.0	3.4	4.2	5.6	7.1	7.1	7.8
Asian	0.9	1.0	1.1	1.6	1.2	1.2	1.8
Pacific Islander	—	—	—	—	0.2	0.2	0.1
American Indian/ Alaska Native	1.0	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.5	0.5	0.5
Two or more races	—	—	—	—	0.7	0.9	1.0

Note: Source: Adapted from US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2013) and Hall, Quinn, L. F., & Gollnick, D. M. (2018).

What Should Be Done?

If elementary schools are going to implement multicultural education into their curriculum, then there is a call to action for teachers to intentionally pursue a positive relationship with their students, even when given a limited measure of time. In order to achieve this, one must take into consideration the most effective form to do so which is believed to be teacher training. Beyond seeing and observing students' communities, we believe that teachers should be more deeply engaged in the communities in which they will teach. Teachers should take training once in the beginning of the year, and two other training sessions before the school year ends. These trainings will allow teachers to learn diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). DEI is a necessary component if we are to educate the next generation to understand the world around them.

To begin with, inclusion (I), the first session will educate teachers to ensure that every student feels a sense of belonging. For example, in a choral music classroom, every student who wants to sing has the opportunity to do so, regardless of ability or experience. Students who are disabled, who can not read music, and who are English language learners will be valued, welcomed, and included. The second session which will include equity (E), will advise teachers to offer individualized support to students that address possible barriers to success. The last training will educate teachers on diversity. Diversity(D), is recognizing that each student is unique in their own way and celebrates these qualities. Doing this will allow students to see themselves reflected in what they are learning. Not only should teachers receive these training, but teachers should also come into contact with the communities where they plan to teach. They should do this in order to build community knowledge and community connections before and after they begin teaching. In the late 1980's, LadsonBillings (1995) proposed three characteristics of culturally relevant pedagogy, broadly defined as, conceptions of self and others, social

relations, and conceptions of knowledge. In her propositions, successful teachers of students of color believed all students were capable of academic success, saw themselves as members of the community, saw their pedagogy as art, believed in drawing knowledge out, and resisted the urge to deposit knowledge.

Referring back to figure one, it is apparent that there are not enough culturally diverse teachers, therefore incorporating teacher training into teachers is an essential part of education. Yan et al. (2011) suggest that emotional intrapersonal beliefs are natural assets of teachers themselves and they reflect in teacher behavior” (p. 83). For this reason it is crucial that teachers recognize their own emotions and beliefs towards their students and act correspondingly. Successful teachers build relationships with students inside and outside of the classroom. They also understand the community and social contexts surrounding student experiences and focus on and draw from students’ belongings in preparation, instruction, and assessment.

Lastly, when a school incorporates multicultural education, teachers are not the only stakeholders. The school as a whole needs to work together to better the lives of all students. When hiring elementary school teachers, personality, teaching styles, and teaching philosophies should be considered in order to better serve the students and the community. The collaboration between teachers and administration should be looked at with a growth mindset in mind. This process will allow for an effective teaching environment where teachers feel well supported and can better invest in their own relationships with their students.

Conclusion:

Overall, there are several things that elementary schools can incorporate into their curriculum to achieve a multicultural classroom. While multicultural teaching may be appealing to some schools, they should carefully consider their decisions when implementing into the

classroom. Additionally, it is important for teachers to face each day with the intent to care for and incorporate the diversity of all of their students. Not only does creating greater multicultural awareness and inclusion help students with different backgrounds and needs succeed, but it encourages acceptance and helps prepare students to thrive in an exponentially diverse world. Awareness will help students become more confident and empathetic towards their peers.

Method

For this Capstone Project, the researchers investigated how teachers feel about having cultural competence in a classroom and if there is anything being done about incorporating it in the classroom. If there is nothing being done, the researchers will think of ways to make it occur in the classroom. From the interviews the researchers can now come up with ideas on what can help schools on including cultural competence in the classrooms.

Context

For the purposes of this Capstone Project, the researchers solicited participants from three different schools in California.

Grasslands Elementary is one of the seven elementary schools in this small town, and is the newest to open in 2020. The school enrolls 378 students throughout the school year from grades 1st-6th, and 14 teachers. From the first year of the school being opened the ethnic groups consist of 58% Hispanic 38% white, 1% Asian, and 1% black.

Monte Bella Elementary Is a public school located in Salinas, CA. It has approximately 836 students in grades Kindergarten through six. According to state test scores, 27% of students are at least proficient in math and 36% in reading. Minority enrollment is 99% of the student body with the majority of them being Hispanic. Monte Bella Elementary continues being one of

only a few public schools in the county that is implementing state of the art technology and 21st Century Learning. Every scholar from Kinder to 6th grade will continue to be issued an iPad tablet. This year their 2nd graders will be piloting utilizing Google Chrome Books as well. Their Scholars are allowed to take home their technology every day.

Glen View Elementary: Glen View Elementary was originally constructed in 1953 and now comprises 26 classrooms, a Multipurpose Room, Library and Technology Center. Their staff is committed to their District's vision, "Excellence-It Takes Everyone!" They strive to provide an instructional program that will allow students to reach their highest academic potential. Their purpose is to foster powerful student learning for all students as well as develop personal attributes to be life-long learners.

Participants and Participant Selection

Stakeholders who participated in this study included four elementary teachers. This group of participants were invited to participate in the interview questions that came forth.

B. Cascia is a white young female who is a first year teacher at Grasslands Elementary, teaching 2nd grade. Her previous education was receiving her Bachelors at Fresno State University, in which she also has experience with doing student teaching.

M. Bowman a white woman who has been teaching at Charleston Elementary for over 25 years. She has many years teaching kindergarten and sometimes teaches other grades during summer school and even participates with students who do after school sports.

A.Sandoval grew up in North Monterey County, in the Prunedale area, attended Elkhorn School and graduated from North Monterey County High School. She graduated from Scripps College in Claremont, Calif., with a dual major in international relations and Spanish. She also received a law degree from Cornell Law School in Ithaca, New York. She went into teaching

because she stated, “very impactful and direct way to address social justice and equity issues in our city, our state and our nation.” She also stated that, “Everything is new to the students and it is exciting to help them learn about the world around them and understand that their brains are constantly growing as they learn.”

T. Richmond has been teaching for more than 19 years. She has a lot of experience with students and knows how to connect with them. She teaches 4th grade at the moment. She attended San Jose State University. She has a major in liberal studies and a minor in anthropology. She has taught grades first through sixth. She originally had dreams of becoming a district attorney, but soon learned that the legal system is a mess and did not think she would be able to make much of a difference. She then decided to get into education to help students while they are young to try to keep them out of the legal system.

This topic is personally meaningful to me because growing up, I was never taught about my own or anyone else’s culture. All of us have a right to know who we are, and where we come from. The stories, people, places of our families are part of a unique story of who we are today. Understanding your own history can help build your well being and personal growth, and can also help connect us with each other. There are several benefits to learning about other cultures. It can open up an opportunity to expand our horizons and to remember that there are other ways of viewing the world and perceiving reality. This can also allow us to be open to criticism, as well as being patient and willing to consider other points of view. I believe that an inclusive curriculum helps teachers and students understand different perspectives, appreciate others' strengths, and build empathy.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

1. What are your thoughts about cultural competence in the classroom?
2. What is currently being done about cultural competence in the classroom?
3. What do you think should be done about improving cultural competence in the classroom?
4. What do you think are the challenges to improving cultural competence in the classroom?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to say about cultural competence in the classroom or improving it?

Procedure

All participants that were interviewed on the phone, through zoom, or by email. If the participants are able to meet in person that is totally fine, in which the interview can take anywhere from 15-30 minutes. If the participant is unable to meet in person, zoom video chats are available as well and will be scheduled at a time that works for the participant for you. Some participants may not have the opportunity to participate in person or through calls, email chat is available as well.

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews will be analyzed for emergent themes.

Results

Multicultural classrooms have been around all over the world, although in the United States they are not as many as other countries. “Multicultural classrooms are classrooms that embrace diversity and incorporate ideas, beliefs, or people from different countries and cultural backgrounds. Several cultural perspectives are put together to enable students to get a truly international education.” (Canada International School 2018). The reason for this paper is to collect data from stakeholders on how they feel about incorporating multiculturalism into the classroom, and what are the ways we could do it. Throughout my observations and collected data you will see which options were collected and which one was that best.

Stakeholders

The stakeholders of our capstone were four elementary school teachers. Two of the teachers were from Los Banos, California. One of them was from Gilroy, CA and the other from Salinas, CA. The teachers were interviewed to see how they felt about teaching culture in classrooms and what would help to include it. These teachers were chosen and compared on their answers to the questions given. In conclusion, not only will the teachers play a big role in this research, but the students do as well.

Evaluation of Options

Multicultural Classrooms have been around for a while, and there are benefits to the child's lives in the future. As for my options throughout my research, I have come to the conclusion that these would be the best options. First being that teachers must receive multicultural training. Second, incorporating culturally appropriate textbooks into the classroom, and lastly diversity clubs. In these options you will see the three criterias that will be used, in which they are the cost, effectiveness, and the amount of collaboration.

Option 1 : Multicultural Training for the Teachers

Public school teachers are taught how to teach math, language arts, social studies, and science. Multicultural subjects are not in public schools lesson plans. If a teacher wants to learn how to teach it, they would then have to learn as they did with the other subjects. These teaching training would be in the beginning of the year before school starts and continue throughout the school year. The training could take place in person or since a lot of things are remotely, they could take place online as well. "As teacher educators, we must prepare all teachers, majority or minority, to provide quality education for all students,..The perspective of multicultural education as something good to have in the program, but not essential to effective, responsible

teacher preparation is both hazardous to our health as a nation and oblivious to the current classroom reality and our future.” (Chisholm).

Option 2: Incorporating Culturally appropriate textbooks into the Classroom

Throughout the libraries in public schools, there is a variety of books inside. These books include fiction, non-fiction, picture books, and many other types of literacy genres. There were little to no books about culture in the school libraries, which made it difficult for the students to learn about culture. By incorporating culturally appropriate books into the libraries it can give the students an opportunity to explore things they have not seen. Incorporating culturally appropriate textbooks into the classroom the teacher will be using different books like picture books, chapter books, and textbooks that can be used as a source to teach about diversity and multicultural education. Pictures books can create a visual and be used as an observation to see diversity within different cultures and backgrounds that bring to an understanding that everyone is different and unique. For example “The books we choose to share with our students matters. Representation and exposure to diverse experiences matters. As educators, we have the opportunity to curate book collections that excite and inspire our classroom communities.” (Mancinelli 2020). Books play big roles in a child's life, and adding books about culture gives exposure to them, like it says in the article.

Option 3 : Diversity Clubs

For the second option diversity clubs would allow students to learn not only about their culture but also the other cultures that surround them. As an example “ Diversity clubs are organized around a specific ethnicity, nationality, language, and/or interest, and provide a fun way for students to connect and bond both within and beyond their group. They offer great opportunities for new international students to build relationships with their classmates and make

new friends” (2021). These clubs can take place before and after school giving the students something to look forward to, because they will incorporate many fun activities the students can do while learning with their classmates.

Table: *Evaluation of Action Options*

	Cost	Effectiveness	Time
Multicultural trainings for Teachers	Medium	High	Medium
Incorporating Culturally appropriate textbooks into the Classroom	Medium/High	High	Medium
Diversity Clubs	Medium	High	Medium

Recommendations

After looking at these three different options for multicultural classrooms, having teacher training would be the best decision on how to incorporate multiculturalism into the classrooms. These trainings can be held in the very beginning of the school year and can continue throughout the year. Because teachers have most of their summers off, it is a good idea that those trainings continue throughout summer break.

Limitations

The limitations of this topic were somewhat in the middle. It was because there were not many articles that have recently been published. As I was doing my research it was hard to find information about the teachers, although I did find many articles that stood out to me, because of how much it impacts the children in the classroom.

Concessions

While finding these recommendations, the most effective one was allowing teachers to do training on multiculturalism. These trainings will provide information that the teacher will be able to take into the classroom that will be beneficial for the students and for themselves. As for when they would be, it would be up to the school's principles and where they would take place. The other two options would still be great considering that they also would be beneficial to the teacher and students.

Justification

Yes, by having training for teachers it will improve the teachers skills. Not only does it increase their skills, but it also increases their knowledge about their students in the classroom. It gives the teachers a clear understanding about what ethnicity and culture the students come from. Although it would not be easy to get everyone on the same track. Teachers may have different opinions, causing them to agree to disagree.

Consequences and Implications

Teaching about cultures can have its positive effects, it can also have its consequences. These consequences being that parents will not agree with the idea of their child being taught about cultures. This then can lead to problems with the principle and the school as one. Because private schools cost money, they offer more resources than public schools do. That is another consequence, because a school does not have enough funding they would not be able to provide the students with the additional resources they need to learn about cultures.

Accountability

This paper is an accountability to the students, teachers, and parents. More importantly the teachers are at most accountable. Multicultural classrooms really impact the lives of teachers.

It allows the teachers to go outside their comfort zone and teach about different cultures. As for the students they take information at a young age which helps them in the future.

Conclusion

In conclusion, having more multicultural classrooms in the United States would impact the students' lives for the better, and can contribute to them as they get older. Not only are the students learning about different cultures, they are also using social skills with their classmates. This makes communicating easy and fun for one another. It is not only beneficial to the students but to the teachers as well. Teachers will be able to observe their class and learn new things about their students everyday. Option 2 would be the best decision because, "To understand how schools of education and teacher preparation programs can better prepare teacher candidates to work effectively in increasingly racially diverse schools" (Max Marchitello and Justin Trinidad 2019). Teachers must learn by themselves in order to teach their students. Therefore to close my findings, having a teacher do training on how to teach multicultural subjects in the class would be the best option.

Action Documentation

The focus of the issue is to incorporate multiculturalism into classrooms. The focus of the issue is to incorporate multiculturalism into classrooms. Today, in California, schools rarely teach elementary students about the culture surrounding them. While multiculturalism has many strengths that may benefit teachers and students, the fact still remains that very little culture is being taught in the classroom. This makes it challenging to embrace diversity and foster culturally inclusive classrooms designed to help every student succeed. Teachers can foster cultural awareness and sensitivity in classrooms. They can do so by expressing interest in diversity, remain sensitive to differences, and teach a culturally inclusive curriculum. In the past, American education has tended to center heavily on Western European history and culture and

on the stories of white Americans. (Walden University, 2020) Teachers should make a planned effort to teach a broad curriculum that more accurately captures the world in its whole. By doing so, teachers can help guarantee students do not feel as if their culture is unimportant or that their own contributions are not wanted. It will take time for teachers to teach students to love and not judge others by their looks but with time, and the right educational action plan, it is possible to live in a world where we see each other as equal. After researching the literature and interviewing several elementary school teachers, three action options emerged. The first action option is to incorporate culturally appropriate textbooks into the teachers curriculum. The second option is to have the school create a “diversity club” which will allow students to learn not only about their culture but also the other cultures that surround them. The last option is to train teachers effectively to be able to teach their students about diversity. These teachers will have to be placed in training, one at the beginning of the school year and two others before the end of the year. The teacher training was the recommended course of action. This was the only action option that ensured teachers would not only be able to create a diverse environment but also ensure equity, inclusion, and diversity are being recognized in their school environment. This option also ensured that every student had a sense of belonging which is valuable to students. Moving forward with this recommendation, a letter was written and addressed to the school principal and the third grade teachers interviewed at the Elementary schools which were analyzed. The letter explained that after carefully analyzing the literature and teacher interview responses, an action option emerged which would embrace the teachers relationships with students, educate teachers on the importance of a multicultural classroom, and create an inclusive environment for students to feel a sense of belonging. Additionally, the letter expanded on the action option, listed a few options on training, and explained the importance of the

implementation of a multicultural classroom. Furthermore, the recommended action option was emphasized followed by an example. In conclusion, the letter declared that the action option is only a suggestion as a means to support teachers. As of yet, there has been no response from the principal or teachers.

To the Principal and Kindergarten, Second, and Third grade teachers,

First of all, We would like to state that it has been a privilege as well as an absolute delight to serve hours at your schools. We benefited significantly from speaking with each of the staff members that we have met with. During our time as community partners, we have been able to conduct research and collect data from four elementary school teachers all pertaining to different schools. This data focused on what could be done to better educate teachers on creating a diverse classroom for elementary level students. After carefully examining the literature and interview data, we would like to approach the suggestion that we believe to be helpful in supporting teachers to not only be able to create a diverse environment but also ensure equity, inclusion, and diversity are being recognized in their school environment. The purpose of this letter is to share this information with you and your faculty with the hope that you find it useful.

With every interview we conducted, it was made clear that teachers feel the need to encourage open communication and teach about cultural similarities and differences. With these interviews, we also concluded that perhaps acknowledgment of diversity means offering several ways to be successful, academically and socially, in the classroom. Additionally, this corresponded with the literature on the subject. Therefore, teachers receiving the correct training on the subject is one of the most beneficial things that they can do. There is room for creativity in the application of this action, which can be beneficial for teachers as they can decide what would work best within their classrooms. An example of what this training for teachers might look like will include a diversity, equity and inclusion program (DEI). This term is used to describe programs and policies that encourage representation and participation of diverse groups of people, including people of different genders, races and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities, religions, cultures, ages, and sexual orientations and people with diverse backgrounds, experiences, and skills and expertise. Teachers should make a planned effort to teach a broad curriculum that more accurately captures the world in its whole. By doing so, teachers can help guarantee students don't feel as if their culture is unimportant or that their own contributions aren't wanted. It will take time for teachers to teach students to love and not judge others by their looks but with time, and the right educational action plan, it is possible to live in a world where we see each other as equal. A crucial takeaway point here is that teachers collectively need to take the necessary time to create positive change in school-wide climate, culture, policy, routines, and rituals before it can occur with their students. Successful outcomes in school climate and culture will require conversations, resources, and actionable steps both in training, faculty meetings, and classrooms. Despite the decided technique, multiculturalism should be kept in order to ensure that young students will be more accepting, more open, and more tolerant of other people. Training for teachers should be implemented once at the beginning of the school year and at least twice before their school year ends. A documentation example is given below.

Training Sessions:	Program Teachings:
Session One	Diversity
Session Two	Equity
Session Three	Inclusion

In conclusion, we would like to thank all faculty that gave us the opportunity to interview them. All schools were very welcoming and created a caring environment for everyone involved. However, there is always room for improvement and we hope this suggestion can be inspiring to everyone included.

Sincerely,
Juztina Rodriguez & Haley Quintanaa

Image: Screenshot of the letter sent to the principals and teachers with suggestions and examples on the consideration of implementing teacher training regarding multiculturalism in their classrooms.

Critical Reflection:

Beginning this semester, I knew exactly what to expect for our LS:400 *Senior Capstone* course. I knew it was going to be one of the most difficult classes I have had. However, I was pleased to have the opportunity to choose a topic of my interest. For that reason, I chose a topic that not only impacted me while going to public schools, but also a topic that needs attention and a call to action. The area that surprised me the most was that all teachers interviewed, never had the opportunity to get asked any types of questions regarding multiculturalism. Another area that not only surprised me but also disappointed me was when I asked one of the third grade teachers what they thought was a challenge on improving cultural competence in the classroom, they answered “We can teach about cultural competence, but when the students go home what was taught in the classroom can easily and quickly be undone”. This statement makes me believe that teachers think the impact that they have on students is very little because once students go home, everything they have learned just gets undone. A change that could have been done could be that we as a group could have gotten more participants to work with. Having only interviewed four elementary school teachers, gives us the disadvantage to only get the teachers point of view on the topic and not the students. Another improvement that could have been implemented could have been that we could have made follow up questions. When one of the teachers' answers disappointed me, I could have followed up and asked more questions regarding her thoughts as soon as I interviewed her because she was later emailed but I never got a response. After this incident, I was a bit reluctant to include her part of the interview in our findings but I concluded it was best to do so. Not only to improve our results but to also learn that not everyone will think the same way and we should respect and accept everyone's opinions even if we do not agree with

them. The final improvement I have is to record the interviews that we did so that we would be able to go back and listen to details that we may have missed while there. I did take notes on some of the points made but the attention to detail could have been better.

Synthesis and Integration

My experience as an undergraduate student at California State University Monterey Bay, has been at times challenging, but ultimately rewarding. The necessary coursework, Liberal Studies (LS) MLOs, and this Capstone action research project have certainly impacted and provided me with professional development. Beginning with MLO 1: Developing Educator, I am confident in the context of a California public educator. I am also confident in my skills to think, write, and speak critically regarding the subject matter of my project. This project itself gave me the opportunities to connect and speak with, as well as learn from other professionals in the field I am pursuing. Additionally, in terms of MLO 2: Diversity and Multicultural Scholar, I recognize my own and others experiences influenced by social identities, socialization practices, and societal institutions from contemporary perspectives. I have critically examined the value of diversity and multiculturalism in elementary schools. In conclusion, analyzing the literature has developed my understanding and has inspired me to further research in the educational field. To move toward the professional career I so desire, I believe it is necessary to continue my research regarding my passions. I should carry confidence in my abilities as a writer, thinker, and professional speaker. My greatest takeaway point from completing this project is that as a future educator, I have the power to motivate, inspire, and value my students.

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