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Self-Evaluation

What were the most challenging dialogues for me?

It was challenging for me to answer discussion five question, “Do you agree with Hirsch and Ravitch and Finn (p. 205) that all people in the United States need to master a common core of shared knowledge?” I disagree with making the focus of school centered on the memorization of information that will supposedly make every student who completes it an educated citizen of the United States. However, I do agree with Banks (2006) when he states, “We need a broad level of participation in the identification, construction, and formulation of the knowledge that we expect all students to master” (p. 205). One dominant, cultural group in America cannot create the curriculum foundation, it must be a diverse group that represents every perspective in order to fully enrich our students about the country they live in. The knowledge presented must be from a variety of sources and most importantly, “serve the interests of all the people within the nation” (Banks, 2006, p. 205). We must allow room for an individual’s perspective and interpretation. However, as much as I want this to happen, I question if it is realistically possible. We have a long way to go before our common core of shared knowledge truly encompasses the multicultural viewpoint of education.

Discussion six question was also challenging, “According to Banks, what are some of the reasons why educators do not teach more about cultural, ethnic, and racial groups?” It

really made me examine myself as a teacher and why I do not teach more about different groups. It is hard to admit my fear of teaching about cultural, ethnic, and racial groups different than my own. My biggest fear is that I will teach about them incorrectly or our class discussion will turn confrontational and I will not know how to handle it. Banks states in order to help students become "effective change agents" teachers must "conceptualize and implement multicultural studies in a way that emphasizes decision making and social action rather than heroes and holidays" (p. 237). This requires more planning and effort by the teacher, but the results could create an educated society capable of making a difference. I want to make a difference, therefore, I will look for training opportunities that will help me get past my fear and provide my students with adequate resources and knowledge of various cultural, ethnic, and racial groups.

How have my ideas regarding multicultural education grown or changed?

After reading *Cultural Diversity and Education* (Banks, 2006), I feel I am able to recognize the systematic, cultural biases within instruction and teaching as well as within curriculum development. I realize the greatest barriers to true multicultural education are the attitudes, beliefs, and biases of the teachers themselves, along with administration, support staff, and other educational politicians. It seems like such a simple thing to change, however, changing a person's view is extremely difficult, especially when it is one that has been instilled through the decades.

One of my favorite quotes from Banks (2006) was, "When individuals can participate in a variety of ethnic cultures, they are more able to benefit from the total human experience" (p. 52). Multicultural education can provide this experience for our students if we allow it to. The most important lesson I take away from learning about

multicultural education is that “research indicates that students are more likely to master skills when the teacher uses content that deals with significant human problems or issues that relate directly to their lived experiences, identifies, hopes, dreams, and struggles” (Banks, 2006, p. 55). I have to know my students backgrounds before I can introduce a multicultural curriculum in a way that my students can relate to it. A multicultural curriculum must “describe events, concepts, and situations from the perspectives of the diverse cultural, racial, gender, language, and social-class groups within a society” (Banks, 2006, p. 207). I understand that multicultural education is so much more than just discusses and celebrating cultural holidays as they came around throughout the year. Multicultural education is integrated daily within the lessons or units discussed, sharing perspectives of various groups and allowing students to construct knowledge from these various perspectives.

What strategies or suggestions would I like to share with my campus peers?

One of the first things I would suggest my campus peers do is examine Banks’ (2006) typology that outlines the stages of cultural identity and decide what stage they honestly fit into. It is only after identifying one’s own perspectives that they can move forward to encompass others. After becoming familiar with their own stage of cultural identity, teachers can then use this typology to classify their students and use their implications to develop multicultural experiences that fit the students’ current level of cultural identity.

I would also like to share Banks’ (2006) suggestions for active approaches that require ELLs to “think on their feet while translating and interpreting meaning” (p. 283). Some of his examples include, word games, role-playing, debating, and self-assessments.

My school is an ELL school so every teacher could use these strategies. I often hear teachers say it is difficult to assess an ELL student's knowledge because they are not sure if they cannot comprehend because of the English language or because they have a learning disability. I would also share Banks' (2006) ideas of linguistic diversity within curriculum materials on page 288.

Finally, I would suggest teachers at my school analyze their own attitudes and beliefs and examine figure 14.3 "Characteristics of effective teachers in a multicultural society" (Banks, 2006, p. 306). We need to ask ourselves, which characteristics are we missing? How can we obtain teacher-education programs that will help us acquire these attitudes, conceptual frameworks, knowledge, and skills?

What key goals, responsibilities, or tasks do I have in navigating multicultural in my classrooms and working with students?

First and foremost, in order to navigate multicultural education in my classroom, I must be knowledgeable about the cultural characteristics of my students and then I can attempt to individualize multicultural experiences for my students (Banks, 2006, p. 308). I have to understand the influences socio-cultural and socioeconomic statuses have on learning. I must search out professional opportunities that will keep me up to date on new ideas and understandings in teaching and learning. One of the responsibilities I have, as a teacher, is to stay informed and educated, as well as take responsibility for my own learning along with my students.

It is my job to establish a learning environment that reflects a genuine cultural for learning, while modeling positive interactions that are warm, caring, and respect differences amongst students. Banks (2006) states, "Research indicates that teachers can

increase the classroom participation and academic achievement of students from different ethnic and cultural groups by modifying their instruction so that it draws on their cultural and language strengths” (p. 15). By doing so, I am providing equitable learning opportunities and equal access to learning for all my students by taking into account their differences and adjusting instruction to fit their needs. Above all, I must have respect for my students and their various cultural, ethnic, and racial backgrounds. I have to make them feel empowered in the classroom and allow them to teach other students as well as myself within a comfortable and safe learning environment.