
Preface

The history of multicultural education in the United States arguably begins with the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Numerous definitions of multicultural education have been proposed by scholars, researchers, organizations, and individuals since that time. Constructing the multicultural paradigm is an ever-changing process in response to the politics and pressures of changing times. It is rare that classroom teachers, academics, and special interest groups have the same definition for multicultural education. As with any conversation on education and educational practice, individuals tend to mold ideas and philosophy to fit their particular perspective.

For many, the boundaries of multicultural education center around racial and ethnic categories, yet others espouse a broader view. To other, less visible, groups in the multicultural mix, the racial and ethnic categories seem to drown out the voices that also promote classroom consideration for their specific perspectives. Other specific cultural groups—representing gender, sexual orientation, special education, white ethnic groups, and others—compete for more consideration by educators. Too many voices can be confusing for teachers and add to the complexity of learning environments.

With so many voices calling for consideration, where do caring teachers go for guidance? Where do we as multiculturally inclusive teachers go to find out what works and what doesn't? What's important and what isn't? What works in one specific school setting (like yours) but not in another?

Unlike many other professions, the primary literature featuring educational research, experimentation, and investigation is usually a world away from the day-to-day grind of the classroom teacher. Also, it is rare for the most current information from academic research to filter into the professional life of a classroom teacher.

Yet, this information does exist and forms a body of knowledge that can be used to improve our craft. There is research on how teachers learn to teach most effectively, how students "learn to learn" best, and, yes, how multicultural principles can best fit into schools, classrooms, and curriculum. A simple key word search of the Internet using the phrase "multicultural education" reveals more than 9 million hits in .07 seconds. Adding the

word “research” to the phrase yields more than 3 million hits. Yes, there is a wealth of information out there and much of it is supported by scientific data to help define what works and what doesn’t. Some of this information can make us all better at what we do in classrooms and help us to improve our understanding of the developing multicultural world.

We know experience is a great teacher, but there are faster, more humane, and more efficient means of teaching and learning about multicultural education for teachers. Coupling the most effective and valid research with experienced teachers and their knowledge of their own communities yields a powerful, effective, rewarding, and highly beneficial learning environment for students.

The purpose of this book is to give a more proactive voice to the research and the researchers who ask and answer the important questions about multiculturalism in educational environments. Filtered through our own experiences in schools, we hope to make the valuable products of this research and inquiry available to all those involved and concerned with the goals of multicultural aims and objectives. Educators don’t have to wait for experience to teach them; they can learn from the experiences of others, use what works, and avoid what doesn’t. They then can combine what they already know with new knowledge. For those new to the inclusion of multicultural thought into classrooms, our book provides a shortcut to multicultural literacy.

This book is not meant to be read sequentially as one would read a novel. Rather, our objective is to focus on useful and practical educational research that translates into a range of choices and solutions to individual teaching and learning problems typically faced by those practicing the inclusion of multicultural themes. Within the chapters of the book, we present a wide range of multicultural instructional strategies and suggestions based on educational, psychological, and sociological studies. Strategies are presented and structured in a user-friendly format:

Strategy: A simple, concise statement of a classroom or professional development strategy dealing with multiculturalism in an educational setting.

What the Research Says: A brief discussion of the research that led to the strategy. This section should simply give the educator some confidence in, and a deeper understanding of, the principle(s) being discussed as a strategy.

Classroom Applications: A description of how this strategy can be used in the classroom.

Precautions and Possible Pitfalls: Caveats intended to make possible a reasonably flawless implementation of the strategy. We try to help teachers avoid common difficulties before they occur.

Source(s): This is the original journal article, conference proceeding, or book reporting the basic research we used to develop the main points of the strategies, research synthesis, classroom applications, precautions, and professional development applications. Readers who wish to follow up

with additional reading and research are urged to do so. Note that not all sources are references cited in the text.

It is our hope that if those new to multiculturalism in the classroom accept some of these strategies, maybe they can avoid the feelings of inadequacy and uneasiness that many of us experience when we first start working with new concepts. Veteran educators can also benefit from the knowledge gained from new or recent research. Given the tremendous need for new multicultural strategies, we cannot afford to let potentially good information and instructional methods slip by.

Depending on the reader's level of experience or location, there may be strategies that presumably don't apply. Also, as in many new endeavors, some teachers may not know what they don't know. We ask that you consider coming back and revisiting this book from time to time to refresh your thinking and seek inspiration for new professional situations you may be faced with. Changing demographics, policies, and instructional emphasis may require a new look at potential solutions to new problems.

Teaching and education in general have never been more exciting or more challenging than they are today. Expectations for teachers, schools, and students continue to rise. The more multicultural resources educators have at their fingertips to assist students along their educational journey, the better the outcome for society. We hope all educators will find this book a useful and highly practical solution to defining and embracing the goals of multicultural education today.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to the people at Corwin Press, especially Faye Zucker for her collaboration and support.

Sarah McNary is grateful to coauthors Cathy Hicks and Neal Glasgow for their dedication to education based on research. Many thanks also go to the students she has worked with over the past 15 years who have taught her more about diversity and the importance of individualized instruction than any formal education could have.

Loving gratitude goes to her husband, Dave, and her children, Erica and Alex, for their unending support of her writing efforts. Her deepest thanks go to her mother, Margaret, who is the most gracious person she knows. Finally, she would like to acknowledge the tremendous confidence and cheerleading her sisters, Jacqueline and Caroline, have conveyed throughout her life.

Neal Glasgow gratefully acknowledges his parents, Frank and Leota Glasgow, for their humanitarian philosophy during the 1950s and the 1960s. Their quiet, often unspoken, view of the diverse world is still an inspiration and guide. Further, he acknowledges and appreciates his son Christian's insight into sexual orientation and society. Christian works in

xvi ● What Successful Teachers Do in Diverse Classrooms

a world his father wouldn't have known about without the benefit of reflections from and conversations with his son. He would like to thank Ron Hopkins and Rik Frank for their review, reflection, and suggestions contributing to many of the strategies. Finally, he thanks his coauthors, Cathy Hicks and Sarah McNary for their skill and insight into the world of diversity and education and contribution to the important conversation about diversity and the classroom.

Cathy Hicks is thankful to the more than 5,000 students she has worked with in a career spanning three decades. They have taught her much about the richness of a diverse classroom and indeed about life itself. She is grateful to coauthors Sarah McNary and Neal Glasgow for their dedication and expertise in working with students. Her deepest thanks go to her husband, Bob, and her children, Summer and Hunter, for their love and support. She would also like to acknowledge the teachers in the San Dieguito Union High School District who work tirelessly to make a difference in the lives of *all* students. And a final acknowledgement and heartfelt thank you to Victor Villasenor, one of her favorite authors, for telling his story through his many outstanding books.

Corwin Press would like to thank the following reviewers for their contributions to this book:

Thomas S.C. Farrell, Associate Professor, Brock University, St. Catharines, ON, Canada

Elise Geither, Instructor, Baldwin-Wallace College, Ridgeville, OH

Steve Hutton, Educational Consultant, Kentucky Department of Education's Highly Skilled Educator Program, KY

Toby Karten, Graduate Instructor, College of New Jersey and Gratz College, PA.

Verena Shanin, ESOL Teacher, Berea Middle School, Greenville, SC

William Sommers, Teacher, Eden Prairie Public Schools, Eden Prairie, MN