HANDOUT

Title: Becoming a Culturally Responsive Teacher

Handout #: 20b

Content:

Specific Activities for Becoming a Culturally Responsive Teacher
(Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002)

5. Visit Students ' Families and Communities

It is important that teachers get to know their students' families and communities by actually going into the students' home environments. This allows teachers to relate to their students as more than just "bodies" in the classroom but also as social and cultural beings connected to a complex social and cultural network. Moreover, by becoming familiar with students' home lives, teachers gain insight into the influences on the students' attitudes and behaviors. Additionally, teachers can use the families and communities as resources (e.g., classroom helpers or speakers) that will contribute to the educational growth of the students.

6. Visit or Read About Successful Teachers in Diverse Settings

Teachers need to learn about successful approaches to educating children from diverse backgrounds. By actually visiting classrooms of successful teachers of children from diverse backgrounds and/or reading authentic accounts of such success, teachers can gain exemplary models for developing their own skills.

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U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs

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7. Develop an Appreciation of Diversity

To be effective in a diverse classroom, teachers must have an appreciation of diversity. They must view difference as the "norm" in society and reject notions that any one group is more competent than another. This entails developing respect for differences, and the willingness to teach from this perspective. Moreover, there must be an acknowledgment that the teachers' views of the world are not the only views.

8. Participate in Reforming the Institution

The educational system has historically fostered the achievement of one segment of the school population by establishing culturally biased standards and values. The monocultural values of schools have promoted biases in curriculum development and instructional practices that have been detrimental to the achievement of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Teachers need to participate in reforming the educational system so that it becomes inclusive. As the direct link between the institution and the students, teachers are in a pivotal position to facilitate change. By continuing a traditional "conform-or- fail" approach to instruction, teachers perpetuate a monocultural institution. By questioning traditional policies and practices, and by becoming culturally responsive in instruction, teachers work toward changing the institution.

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