

Philosophy of Diversity: A Final Exam

Part I: The Importance of Multicultural Education

Write a minimum of 100 words explaining the importance of K-8 teachers representing many cultures and perspectives throughout their curriculum and learning environment. Include the belief that all students can achieve at high levels and that it's every teacher's responsibility to help each student reach his/her full potential.

Part II: Creating an Engaging Environment for ALL Learners

We spent the majority of this semester engaging the concepts pertaining to education philosophy, practice, practicum and policy. Consider the work you will do as a future teacher:

Paragraph 1: Explain how you will design, adapt, and deliver instruction to address each student's diverse learning strengths and needs, and how you will create opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in different ways.

Paragraph 2: Describe how you will bring multiple perspectives to your presentation of your content in your teaching, to include the students' personal, family, and community experiences and their cultural norms.

Paragraph 3: Describe the benefits of a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom. How will you develop English proficiency skills in all of your students while respecting the linguistic capabilities of all of your students.

Part III: Current Issues in Education

Throughout the semester, we discussed current hot topics in education. In 2 paragraphs, please discuss 2 hot topics OTHER THAN THE ONE YOU PRESENTED, developing the following:

1. Use the course readings to explain why ONE of these issues is significant. Describe the ways a person's social identity group(s) could change the way they are impacted by certain education policies and practices.
2. Do the same with another hot topic.

Student Work Sample

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Part 1: The Importance of Multicultural Education

Representation is everything. It is extremely important that students know and feel that they are represented in the classroom in order for them to feel included and feel like they have a purpose in being there. If students do not feel like they matter in the classroom, nothing you do in the classroom will matter to them because they cannot feel connected to it. All students can achieve at high levels, so long as the teacher who is instructing them is not limiting them or placing restrictions on them. It is important that teachers keep in mind that they are the ones who will help the students reach their full potential. The teacher must make an effort to help all students feel as if they belong and can connect to content in order for them to learn and grow in the classroom. What is the point in making an effort towards something that does not matter to you? This is the key fact that teachers must know in order to create a learning environment conducive to an array of different cultures and languages.

Part 2: Creating an Engaging Environment for ALL Learners

Paragraph 1- “That is, whenever you get a mandate or guideline, set it aside until you have sketched out your larger purposes and goals and filled those in with specific plans and concrete action steps” (Ayers, pg.113). As an educator, I will design, adapt, and deliver instruction to address the needs and strengths of my students by taking the time to consider what their needs and strengths are. By reflecting upon a mandate or a guideline before taking action, you give yourself the chance to consider the specific needs and strengths of your students and can then act accordingly. By allowing this reflection, you can create lessons that will best benefit your students. The learning will become more personal and you can get the most out of the

requirement that you have been handed. Students potential to learn will only increase by putting in the time and the effort to make sure that the growth of a student is at the center of what you are trying to accomplish in a lesson. Giving students a choice in how they demonstrate their learning very important. “The point is that any single objective can be simply an obvious part of something larger and fuller, or it can be sought out and brought onto center stage and taught didactically as if it held some magical power in and of itself,” (pg.114). There can be so much more to a benchmark than what it literally says. It is important for students to have a choice in how they show their understanding of the benchmark because there is so much depth that may be missed initially. Students have different interests and need to be able to feel like they can make a connection to the content in order for them to care about it and learn something from it.

Paragraph 2- Having multiple perspectives in the presentation of content is extremely important. It would be very difficult to back up the statement that only considering one viewpoint is the best way to learn something new. I think it would be very beneficial to bring people from outside of the school to come and talk about their perspective on the content I am teaching in order to expand the learning and minds of my students. We talked about story telling being one of the most effective ways to engage learners and help them make connections and I really think this would benefit my students. Bringing in family members of my students who are from different backgrounds and cultures to speak about their life would be very beneficial to get a sense of how we are all unique. Textbooks often fail teaching students in-depth about different cultural norms. The problem with teaching from just a textbook alone is that it is very limited in connections. The factual information is not enough to have a real understanding of how things were, are, and might be. The people of the company who write the textbooks are usually composed of those from the dominant race. These people get to choose which information is

most important to put in the textbooks. Therefore, if you only teach from the textbook, students will only learn what the textbook wants them to learn. Sometimes, things are purposely twisted or left out in order to make people or situation look different than what reality is or was.

Paragraph 3- Culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms have a lot of profit to the learning and growth of a student. Students that get to participate in a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom have the benefit of an expanded horizon. People do not know what they do not know. By having a classroom that is diverse, students get to engage and interact with one another and learn more about a life that may be very different from their own. They get more of a real-world experience by working and engaging with people who are different from themselves. They learn about new concepts, new perspectives, and new ways to do things in life. English proficiency skills are important for students who are not native English speakers. One of the best strategies for teaching students with limited English proficiency skills is building a strong relationship with the parents of the child. ELL parents often feel neglected by the general education teacher and feel as if the teacher thinks that they have low intelligence just because they do not speak the language perfectly. The fact of the matter is, the parents know more about the student than any teacher may ever know. It is essential that the parent is involved and up to date in order for the ELL student to find success in the classroom. It is also important to keep the ELL students engaged with their peers. By keeping them in the general education classroom, students are able to practice their speaking and writing skills with their peers. Group projects are great because the ELL student is allowed to practice their English while engaging with their peers in a small group setting. There is less pressure in a small group than there is if they had to stand in front of the class alone and speak. Making sure the student feels comfortable in the class

is key. They are going through a very significant amount of change culturally and linguistically. They need to feel welcomed and feel as if they can rely on the teacher for respect and grace.

Part 3: Current Issues in Education

One of the hot topics that stood out to me was the Pledge of Allegiance. I had never thought about the fact that forcing children to say the Pledge of Allegiance with the statement “under God” may be going against their own religious beliefs. Growing up Catholic, this was never an issue for me, and I have always particularly liked that we say it. I had never considered though, that this could be very weird for people who do not believe in God. I tried to place myself in the position of those people and I would feel weird and uncomfortable saying something that hits very close to home if I did not believe it. This hot topic really made me think about other people and their perspectives. With situations like this, it is important to think about all aspects of a student. You must consider the whole person. “The focusing questions for effective teachers must be these: Who is this person before me? What is the measure of her hope and hurt? What are his interests and areas of wonder? How does she express herself and what is her awareness of herself as a learner?” (Ayers, pg. 42). The child’s social identity group must be considered when implementing a policy that states everyone must do something like this. Is it ethical to force someone to say something that they do not believe? It seems as if the question is often ignored.

The other hot topic that stood out to me was childhood obesity. There has been an obesity epidemic in America for a while now and it is affecting many children around the United States. There is evidence showing that students who are active throughout the day tend to do better in schools. Some schools are cutting recess or limiting physical education classes to once a week, causing movement to be an issue and a role in the obesity epidemic. Nutrition is also a key factor

playing a large role in this issue. Students may come from a social identity group where nutrition activity is not valued. They may also come from low-income homes who cannot afford extra-curricular activities or who cannot provide nutritious food. They may not be able to provide food at all. It is very important that schools and policies take this into consideration when thinking about school lunches and snacks and physical activity. Schools need to realize the importance that both nutrition in lunches and activity throughout the school day are essential to the success of the students, especially those who may not receive it outside of school. “Teaching is a human activity, constrained and made possible by all the limits and potential that characterize any other human activity. Teaching depends on people – people who choose to teach and other people who become students, by choice or not. There are these two sides of teaching, and on each side there are human beings, whole people with their own unique thoughts, hopes, dreams, aspirations, needs, experiences, contexts, agendas, and priorities,” (Ayers, pg. 29). It is important for schools and teachers to teach the whole person, allowing time for activity and proper nutrition education. Teaching the whole person involves a lot of activity and can help the child to grow not only as a student, but as a person as well.