

Non-Culturally Responsive Classrooms

Course 210: Professor Diaz

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Abstract

This paper will talk about non culturally responsive classrooms and how it is a big issue in early childhood education classrooms. How it has impacted many families and children in these past years. As young children are going into a new environment such as their classroom. This issue needs to be addressed now because when children are in a classroom where they don't mirror themselves in the activities or books, they feel excluded and uncomfortable. The children as a group are not being exposed to other cultures or able to view things from a different perspective because they aren't being exposed to these different cultures. Teachers start to notice children change their behavior and act out, feel unmotivated, and uncomfortable or lack motivation. The students no longer want to interact with other peers, they can no longer problem solve, thinking critically and their language development is affected. We as educators have the right to help these students and make them feel welcome regardless of their background. In this paper, we will see that teachers can have a big impact in children's lives by making their classroom more culturally responsive by adding books and having activities that involve families and their backgrounds. Educators can also form a bridge with families, by doing this they are creating a positive relationship. Having a strong communication with families will help educators in what to do next to best help the child. This issue will be of interest to local governments, school directors, teachers, parents, and the Department of Education in making classrooms more inclusive and diverse.

Non-Culturally Responsive

Having culturally responsive classrooms Introduction as to why this is an important topic in early childhood. It is an important issue in Early Childhood because it affects children's

academic development and their experience in school. “Teachers can partner with families by inviting them to visit the classroom and participate in activities with their child” (Steed, 2016,p.2). Having parents come in to share an activity with their children shows you care about everyone and making sure you have everyone included. When having a problem between children not automatically jumping into conclusions and blaming that one kid instead adding a restorative justice strategy is needed. You would solve the problem by talking it out instead of only letting one person feel bad. “She feels that it is important for the students to know who is contributing to their own language and whose ideas they are using to learn new things” (Jimenez,2014. p.34). Letting the students who are bilingual learners express themselves in their native language adds to the classroom being culturally responsive because it shows as an educator you are included in the classroom and not letting a language barrier stop you from helping the development of students. “Through play, children can assume active roles in earning important cultural historical concepts. Families can provide important cultural information to identify and use these resources to support classroom play and learning” (Cohen,2009. p.77). Not only can we add books and activities to our classroom to make them culturally responsive. But we can also incorporate plays that reflect other people's culture and help them better understand. Some kids learn by hearing books or seeing videos, others learn through active play. Having multiple ways in which children learn about other cultures makes your classroom more culturally responsive.

Statement of the Problem

The specific problem I want to focus on for the advocacy project is a classroom not being culturally responsive for all the students. The people who are affected by the issue are the

students and the families. The children are being affected by the problem because they are seeing books, activities, and an environment where they cannot mirror themselves. Students cannot connect to anything because nothing fits with them. Families are being affected because they don't see their culture being represented in the classroom, which causes them to feel uncomfortable and excluded from the classroom. The community is being affected by the problem because there can be a lack of cultural diversity and no communication with each other.

This issue needs to be addressed now because when children are in a classroom where they don't mirror themselves in the activities or books, they feel excluded and uncomfortable. The children as a group are not being exposed to other cultures or able to view things from a different perspective because they aren't being exposed to these different cultures. The problem is the greatest when teachers start to notice children change their behavior and act out, feel unmotivated, and uncomfortable, or lack motivation. This behavior starts to happen because the students do not see how they can connect to the activity which causes them to simply not do it.

Intervention is needed to avoid negative consequences such as the child acting out and not participating in class activities. When certain children are being pointed as the problem. Not only when they are younger, but it could lead to children acting out when they get older. Teachers should ask the child what is wrong and why are not participating. Teachers can intervene by incorporating more books about different cultures in the library area, having the family come on days like culture day and have them bring a dish that is from their backgrounds, and including music that comes from different places and has a little of everything. The target audience would be the Department of Education (DOE) and the teachers. I would target the DOE because they are the ones who create the curriculum plan for the year. They can switch up the

plan and include books, activities, and workshops where there is the inclusion of students and families' cultures. I would also target the teachers because they could also provide extra activities during the school year like workshops to make everyone in the classroom feel welcome and included. My target audience is other educators because they have classrooms of their own and would want to have a welcoming environment. Some classrooms struggle with having something the student can connect back to. They can start off by adding books that reflect children's background.

Research suggests non culturally responsive classrooms are a current concern to the early childhood fields

Research suggests that the impact of non-culturally responsiveness in the classroom can negatively affect academic development on young children is a current concern to the early childhood fields. This research shows us what educators can do to have a more culturally responsive classroom such as activities, approaching a problem, and getting their bias out of the way.

Article 1

The article titled “Culturally Responsive Strategies to Support Young Children with Challenging Behavior” by Charis Lauren Price Elizabeth A. Steed (2016) talks about five culturally responsive core strategies that help promote positive teacher relationships with young children. African American boys experience a higher rate of suspensions and expulsion from preschool settings than other children. These strategies also help minimize challenging behaviors like aggression, noncompliance, defiance, tantrums, and poverty destruction.

One of the strategies that was mentioned in the article is to learn more about the children and the families. Learning more about the family and the children connects to a classroom being culturally responsive because you get to learn more about each child and family, and intentionally be able to adapt and respond to each child's strengths and needs. In the article, it said, “teachers can partner with families by inviting them to visit the classroom and participate in activities with their child.” (Steed, 2016, p. 2) Creating activities where parents can participate, not only are teachers being exposed to different cultures and backgrounds, but the children are as well. Having an activity like culture day where each family brings a plate from their culture to the classroom. The children would learn more about other people’s backgrounds through food. African American boys experience a higher rate of suspensions and expulsion from preschool settings than other children. A strategy that was mentioned is using group time to discuss the conflict. Group time to discuss conflict is “a restorative justice approach, which offers those involved in the conflict an opportunity for reconciliation.” (Steed, 2016, p.7) Using this approach in a classroom instead of jumping to conclusions and blaming a child. This approach develops methods and awareness, so children do not feel ashamed during the group talk. Problem-solving a group can help learn and enable children and adults to build strong relationships. Developing and teaching empathy in a classroom connects to culturally responsive because through empathy teachers and children can support positive relations which creates emotional connections. Teachers must leave any bias or misconceptions behind with empathy because it creates an empathetic classroom. One change teacher can do to their classroom is “choosing high-quality books for the classroom, make sure that the characters reflect the ethnic makeup of your classroom.” (p.4) By adding more books that are reflections of the children in the classroom you

help create mirrors where they can make connections. It also makes them feel included in the environment.

The author's position on the issue is they are trying to create a more culturally responsive classroom and explaining activities, books, and actions the teachers can add or do themselves in their classrooms. They believe that having a culturally responsive classroom is needed in all schools because they talk about the impacts when there are children left out and not noticed by teachers. They talk about the impacts of a child having challenging behavior and it affects their social and emotional development. Teachers are responsible for changing that behavior and ways in which they can approach that situation.

I selected this research source because it gives various ideas and explains the impact of having a culturally responsive classroom. It helps a teacher change the way they have the classroom set up. It helps them by giving them extra help on what to add to make children feel more comfortable in the environment. What can be learned from this article is understanding not only the perspective of the teacher but also the perspective of children. The article says challenging behavior starts when they feel rejected by their peers and receive less positive feedback from the teacher. It's trying to tell us that children start to act out when children can't connect back to the activity or simply don't understand it.

Article 2

The article titled "Exploring Cultural Heritage in a Kindergarten Classroom" by Lynn E. Cohen talks about learning to be more culturally responsive as a teacher and classroom can be taught through play. Teachers must plan and create curriculums that will help support and value the different cultures, backgrounds, and religions that children represent. It also mentions the

importance of having school-family partnerships and helps create a connection with different viewing points on children. The text mentions culture is involved in children's daily lives experiences and environments but with the heritage that reflects the history and origins.

Children can feel excluded by simply mispronouncing their name or change the way their name sounds. In the text, it mentions a situation a teacher had with one of her students. As readers and writers, the students would have an activity where they would practice familiar words, like their names. This routine the class had made a little girl very upset when they got to her name, the children told them they care because she would change the pronunciation of her name. This situation is one that many children face when they go to school because they see the teacher has no problem pronouncing other kids' names correctly but when they come to yours, she has trouble and says it completely differently. It connects to a classroom being more culturally responsive because when teachers do small things like pronouncing a child's name right or having that interaction with their parents it shows that the teacher cares about everyone in the class. In the text, it also mentions "play is sociocultural in nature and an important part of a child's learning and development. Children assume roles, act out pretend scenarios, and use conversation to plan and negotiate their play with others." (Cohen, 2009, p.72). Having played in classrooms helps children examine other children's cutlery through play instead of text since some children either visual or hands-on activity. Supports children's sensitivity and awareness of diverse cultures. To add support to the learning they are doing through play "offering the children opportunities to interact with people whose heritage was different from theirs, allowed the children to develop a better understanding of the many differences among cultures, including holiday celebrations" (Cohen, 2009, p.74). These are only a few of the positive outcomes when

children are exposed to a culturally responsive environment. They start to open their minds and have more knowledge of the real world and as they start to grow up.

The author's purpose of this article was to provide teachers extra help in small things they can fix in their classroom to make sure everyone is being exposed to what the real world is. It was an article to inform teachers of the actions they take, even as simple as mispronouncing that name or not having a relationship with the family, make the classroom less representational. The author's bias is there should be classrooms that are culturally responsive because it helps the children learn more about themselves but also their classmates. It teaches children respect and being open-minded when they are in a new environment.

I selected this research source because you do not really hear stories where teachers realize they are doing the wrong thing. I have never read an article where this situation occurs, I have had this situation happen to me when I was younger, and I connected to this article. I want educators to read this and think of their classroom and think of what they can do to make the classroom inclusive. What can be learned from this source is the importance of why a classroom must be culturally responsive and what kind of activity can have the children and families involved.

Article 3

The article titled “Lessons Learned From a Teacher Working With Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children” by Carla Amaro-Jimenez is about the cultural and linguistic differences between teachers and students that have an impact on their learning and teaching in many ways. Through the article, Jimenez goes through the steps Mrs. Pennington does to ensure all children could succeed.

Through the article, Jimenez explains that Mrs. Pennington classroom and what she does to create a nurturing and caring classroom community is essential when working with children who come from different backgrounds. The article mentions “having a voice in the classroom is important for the dual language learned, because this gives them an opportunity to speak out in a supportive environment” (Jimenez, 2014, p.34). Allowing children to speak in their native language and not forcing them to stick to English show that you are still paying attention to them even if there is a language barrier. Mrs. Pennington does not let a language barrier stop the students in her class from participating. Just like Mrs. Pennington many more teachers should do the same, don't let language be a reason why kids are left out of the conversation. Have children engaged in a way they are the most comfortable and be respectful and acknowledge they are trying. “Inner resources characteristics of themselves and their culture as part of the learning experience” (Jimenez, 2014, p.34). Having children connect activities, lessons to their own lives and their own backgrounds helps them as they are learning. They have some background information on a topic, and they are adding more to it when they are being exposed to other cultures or backgrounds. In the article it also says, “When we take the time to get to know students' individual characteristics, and when we introduce classroom activities that take these factors into account, learning and consequently teaching- becomes more meaningful” (Jimenez, 2014, p.36). This quote is information about new educators and educators who have been in the education system for a longtime now to expose the children constantly to activities or books where culture is involved. Constantly having them exposed to these topics has a good impact on them because it becomes more meaningful to you but as well to the children.

The author's purpose was to inform other people and educators as well, what Mrs. Pennington does to make sure all her students are learning and participating in their the way. The author's bias is that they believe that the classroom should be suited for everyone that is attending. The classroom should be culturally responsive and be inclusive of everyone. The authors agree with the strategies that Ms. Pennington takes to make sure she's having everyone involved in the activity that must be done. The author wants other educators to know something they can add to their teaching to make sure they are including everyone.

I selected this research source because it explains the routine Mrs. Pennington takes when she is in her classroom. The teacher's background is different from the students and there is a language barrier, but she still encourages her students to use their home language to express themselves and their ideas. She addressed 5 lessons she has learned from teaching that will help her students' needs. This source can be used as one for guidance for new educators for educators in the schools already Educators can learn from one another because they don't all share the same learning skills.

Small Advocacy Action

One action that I can take to make a classroom more culturally responsive and for kids to have an environment where they are being reflected is by giving workshops to teachers. The first thing that I would need to do is have meetings with teachers and assistant teachers from prekindergarten to 2nd graders. In this meeting we would discuss the negative outcomes of not having culturally responsive classrooms like children acting out, not wanting to participate and how it can affect them as they get older. We will also discuss what changes we can start doing to the classroom. We can start of by adding books that reflect the children's families and

backgrounds, doing this would make children feel they are being included. Or something as simple as making sure the teachers are pronouncing all the children's name correctly. By doing this it shows the teachers care about everyone and their names. Also, do activities or workshops where families and children can connect and learn about the student and family. By including parents, they would see that their children are not alone and that someone care about them regardless of their background. One of the workshops the teachers can include in their classroom is culture day. Culture day is where every family brings in a dish that represents their background into the classroom and shares with everyone. To give support all students, I will volunteer my time to go into all classrooms and make sure the teachers are making changes. I will help them to do better in the school and have a better academic development in their early years.

Large Advocacy Action

The target audience would be the Department of Education (DOE) and the teachers. I would target the DOE because they are the ones who create the curriculum plan for the year. They can switch up the plan and include books, activities, and workshops where there is the inclusion of students and families' cultures. The first step would be getting all the teachers from the community to write to their principles and explaining to them that their why it's important for children to have more access to these resources such as books and workshops in their classroom all year long. As a group of teachers, we can try to get in contact with the local government to suggest giving more funding to public schools. With the money the schools receive it would benefit the extra support that is planned on giving to the children.

After that, I would ask to the other teachers to get together to present this idea to the director of the school. We will be collect evidence in our classroom support that

the Department of Education know what is happening in the school. After getting reunited with the DOE, they will bring this idea to the district. But to have a strong support, I and the other teachers would collect signatures from the community and families who agree with the idea. Later, together with the district and different teachers from our school, we will present this idea to other schools from the same district. We will give information sections in different schools about the situation that having classrooms that are not culturally responsive are having small and long consequences After that, we will bring this idea to the Department of Education with many evidences. So, they can see why we need to ask to our local government to give more funding's to have access to more resources that teacher can provide for families and children. Also, I would encourage to teachers and other colleagues to write letters to our local government, so our local government can see that many people agree with the idea of making classrooms more inclusive and diverse.

Commentary

I choose this issue to advocate for because as time goes by more people are immigrating to the United States. It is causing an increase in diversity, cultures, religions, and race, which is a very good thing. Since there is an increase in diversity, schools do not know how to approach and teach culture to young children and are having a hard time doing so. By not being a culturally responsive environment, it's causing children to feel neglected and ignored. The families do not feel welcome and make schools a dominant race.

This issue is personally very meaningful to me because growing up and attending both elementary school and middle school in park slope was not easy. My neighborhood is predominantly white, as time has gone by there has been a lot of gentrification and less diversity. Being 5 years old back in 2007 at my old elementary school I did not see much in my community where I was able to identify with. The few things I do remember being something from my background were mostly misconceptions people have of my culture and background. A situation that made me choose this topic was one I had back in 4th grade. I will never forget my teacher blaming my mom for being behind other children. I know the language barrier was hard, but I know my mom tried very hard to always push me to my full potential. Growing up there was a lack of representation for race groups, and I had to live through it at a young age.

This topic impacts me as an early childhood educator because it has taught me a lot from activities to classroom layout and how to make my classroom a place where both children and families are being represented and included. As an educator for small children, I want to be able to expose them to various cultures, races, religions and have these interactions in the classroom. Having these interactions will open them up more to what the real world is about. I do not want young children to feel left out and not be included because there are negative consequences when that happens to a child.

References

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