



Teaching with (and not about) students' diverse cultures

Responding to student diversity in today's Canadian classrooms

In reference to the article *(Trans-multi)culturally Responsive Education: A critical framework for responding to student diversity*

By Dr. Latika Raisinghani

DISCUSSION LEADER CHEAT SHEET: Key points from the article

5 minutes

AIM: TO INTRODUCE THE SESSION AND TODAY'S THEME: **GOING BEYOND CURRICULAR EXPECTATIONS TO RESPOND TO STUDENT DIVERSITY**

A **(trans-multi)culturally responsive education** means beginning with what students have: their prior knowledges, which may include their cultural ways of knowing, the diversity of their learning experiences, and their self-identified cultural identities. It asks teachers to (re)think: “*What do we need to “undo” and “unlearn” to (re)create curriculum that is responsive to the multiple needs of today’s diverse students?*” For teachers, this means:

- **Understanding** that culture does not simply mean differences based on race, ethnicity, nationality or any other fixed identifications, but includes all dynamic cultural experiences that students bring into school.
- **Embodying** “authentic caring,” which emphasizes treating others how they wish to be treated, not how we would like to be treated in a similar situation (i.e. realizing that we cannot truly “put ourselves in another’s shoes”).
- **Reflecting** on how their own assumptions might lead them to hold misconceptions and take prejudiced actions towards diverse students (e.g. often teachers consider science and math as culture-free, neutral subjects. They may also have stereotypical understandings about student diversity such as: *All students of a particular culture are good in math*).

DISCUSS

20 minutes

AIM: TO GET EVERYONE SHARING THEIR THOUGHTS AND QUESTIONS

The discussion leader can choose 2 questions from the list below or integrate questions of their own.

- 1** The author shares quotes from three teachers facing difficulties with teaching diverse students: “*The parents of certain cultural backgrounds complain that I am teaching ‘baby math’ and that their children can do a higher math. I tell them that I am teaching a Canadian curriculum in Canadian style!*”; “*It makes sense that if they [culturally diverse students] have come to Canada, they need to adapt to our Canadian style of teaching*”; and “*Sometimes, I wish that I had all Canadian children in my classroom.*” **Have you ever felt this way yourself, or heard of something similar being said? What is Canadian Curriculum and Canadian Style of Teaching in your view? Who could be the Canadian Children in your classrooms?**
- 2** Teachers identified student diversity as one of the greatest challenges in a 2012 survey. According to the author, diversity can take the following forms, among others: cultural, ethnic, linguistic, religious, geographic, gender(ed) sexual identities, and exceptionalities or dis/abilities. **Do you agree that student diversity is one of your greatest challenges? Why or why not? Is yes, does the challenge differ depending on the type of diversity you have in your classroom?**
- 3** The author met a teacher who claimed that they see their students only as “individuals” and treat all students the “same.” In other words, the teacher took pride in not considering students’ culture while teaching. **Have you ever felt the same way as this teacher? How would you react to being told that a ‘(trans-multi) culturally responsive’ educator is cognizant of the fact that seeing students only as “individuals” does not acknowledge their cultural backgrounds, and can actually perpetuate systemic discrimination by ignoring the difference?**

DO IT

15 minutes

AIM: TO UNDERSTAND HOW RECOGNIZING – RATHER THAN IGNORING – STUDENTS’ DIFFERENCES CAN HEIGHTEN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

In small groups (2-3), read the following scenario:

A teacher is organizing a field trip and sends forms home with their students so that their parents can provide permission and send along payment. A few students have not paid or brought back their forms, and it’s now past the deadline. The teacher announces the names of the students who have missed the deadline aloud in front of the class, yet nothing changes and the students end up feeling inferior compared to their peers.

Share back and display

After time for discussion, invite each group to share recommendations and insights on alternative ways to address this situation in ways that might empower students and their families.