

Discussing Topics of Diversity in the Elementary Classroom

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Research Question

- How does discussing topics of diversity in my classroom affect my teaching practices?

Abstract

- The purpose of this study was to explore the potential effects of incorporating topics of diversity into my lessons and how my teaching might be affected.
- The research for this study was collected through daily journal reflections and video recordings of my teaching.

Methods

- This study took place in Beaver Springs, PA at West Snyder Elementary School, a school within the Midd-West Area School District.
- My research was collected during my time as a student teacher in a kindergarten classroom of 14 students.
- The data of my research was collected through reflecting daily on my teaching practice in a written journal, weekly video recordings of myself as I taught various subjects, and written reflections made during a post-reflection course for my study abroad program.

Findings:

- Before discussing topics of diversity in the classroom it is necessary for one to assess their personal background and potential implicit biases. This leads to eliminating biased perspectives and stereotypes that may unfairly influence the path of conversation in the classroom.
- Discussing diversity at the elementary level can include topics of kindness, sharing, race, social responsibility, and culture.
- In order to engage young students in discussions about diversity, and to encourage inquiry and perspective-seeking, it is important to let them guide the discussion as much as possible.
- Fostering an atmosphere of open communication and non-judgement creates a safe space for young students to talk about their own experiences and thoughts.
- There is a multitude of resources that can be utilized when discussing diversity in the classroom such as: reliable news sites, guest speakers, children's literature, historical associations resources, and the personal experiences of the students in the classroom.

Conclusions

- In challenging myself to explicitly address diversity in my classroom I grew more confident in my abilities to be unbiased in mediating conversations surrounding topics of diversity.
- Through this self study I have grown more aware of my personal background, culture, and implicit biases. This awareness has allowed me to change and evolve my personal perspectives of diversity and culture.
- This self study has also broadened my knowledge base of current events and cultures from around the globe, as well as current diversity conversations happening at large in the United States.

Implications for Further Practice

- Explicitly inserting diversity discussions into lessons taught in various subjects creates an open space for students to learn about the various facets of diversity and how interactions between people are influenced by diversity.
- Creating a conversation space can lead to building better rapport and gives them a safe space to exist unjudged.
- All educators should take time to reflect on their implicit biases and own perspectives of diversity to become more cognizant of how their beliefs may be influencing their teaching.