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August 17, 2022

**Background and Problem**

I work at a preschool through fifth grade elementary school in Mount Clemens. I currently teach third grade students. These students are roughly between the ages of seven to nine years old. On average, I teach a group of twenty-five to thirty students in a class. The students in my class are very diverse. Overall, the students in my class are African American, White, Mexican, Chaldean, and various other cultures. Roughly ninety percent of the students in my class are of low socio-economic backgrounds.

The school that I teach at is a very diverse school. There are students with all different cultures and backgrounds. Diversity needs to be embraced throughout the school and district. The problem with my current curriculum that I am expected to teach by the district is that it does not offer enough diversity. With a class full of diverse students, it is important to make their cultures visible in the classroom. There needs to be a shift in the curriculum where the diverse students can see themselves in the learning that they are doing in the classroom.

**Research**

According to an article by David Church (2021), “as the conversation across the country progresses towards diversity and decolonization of the curriculum, it is important to consider the many ways of demonstrating recognition of diversity” (pg. 31). The article continues to talk about the ways in which schools can demonstrate diversity inclusion. It is important for students to feel included in the school that they must attend every day. Students should be able to see themselves in the readings, math programs, and even in history that they are being taught. Including the students’ cultures into their learning will allow students to make meaningful connections and form a willingness to learn more.

In an article by Rebecca Jones (2002) she states, “We know that race drives us apart, and has driven us apart, and will continue to drive us apart if we don’t address it” (pg. 21). Students in elementary school are still figuring out their identities. It is important that as teachers we are addressing and acknowledging the different cultures and races that are in the school. There is a shift from seeing all students as humans and not by color to recognizing that everyone is different and that is what makes us all so unique. Young students are still learning how to address differences in each other, so as a school there needs to be talks about diversity and differences in cultures. Students will learn to accept one another for who they are and embrace their cultures and backgrounds. This will make all students feel like they belong and can even help with their academics.

Not only do we need to incorporate students’ cultures and backgrounds, but it is important for teachers to embrace their identities as well. According to an article by Candice Bocala and Rolesia Holman, “We discovered that experienced facilitators of equity-centered professional learning engage in a sequential process to build and strengthen relationships across difference” (pg. 67). They go on to say, “professional learning leaders must not only excel at typical facilitation skills — such as being aware of group dynamics, supporting inquiry, and creating relationships — but develop a nuanced understanding of their own unique identities and how they influence the work” (pg. 67). To build a diverse culture with inclusion, teachers must also embrace their own identities and cultural backgrounds. When doing this, the teachers can form better relationships with their students. Building relationships with students is key to a successful year of growth.

**Action Plan**

There are several ways that I would like to see my school change to address these problems with diversity. First, the school would benefit from simply incorporating diversity weeks. Since our curriculum is not going anywhere anytime soon, there are other solutions by recognizing cultures through read aloud books, discussion, and even student of the day. During diversity week, the students will be able to share their family’s backgrounds and cultures, talk about important diverse people that influenced the world, and even enjoy fun treats that are from different cultures. Diversity week will be a week where the entire school comes together to embrace all the cultures that make our school so great.

The second part of my action plan to address this problem within my school is through teacher profession development. My district offers eight full days of teacher driven profession development. For the last year, the professional development has been about teaching students to read, building resilience, and teacher burn out. For the next year, I would like our professional development to be all about diversity. This profession development would teach teachers how to address diversity issues in the classroom, school, and with parents. It would give teachers ideas on how to incorporate diversity in the classroom on a daily basis. It would also help teachers understand their own identities so that they are able to create better relationships with the students in their diverse classrooms.

Overall, the key to solving this school problem is to embrace the different cultures that create these great little students we have at our school. Incorporating their cultures and their diverse backgrounds will only strengthen our classroom as a whole, but it will also make each student feel like they belong. As diversity becomes a larger issue throughout our country, teachers can make a small impact by embracing each student for who they are and where they come from.

**References**

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