

Reflection: Spring Semester, 2007

Becoming Multicultural Teacher Educators – Beginning our Journey



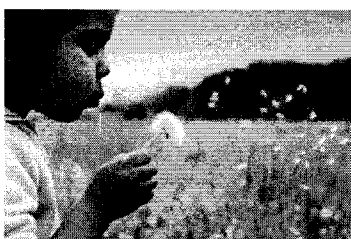
Multicultural Teacher Educators Share Three Qualities

1. Courage to question mainstream knowledge
2. Solidarity with students
3. Passion for social justice

Admiration
 Relationships
 Genuine respect
 High expectations
 Identity
 Hope
 Learning
 Compassion

*These qualities need to be nurtured.
 We need to rethink professional development –
 to support teaching as intellectual
 With rigorous demands, teachers find community
 in intellectual work*

Need to ask ourselves – Where have I been? *Who am I today? Who will I be tomorrow?*
Why do I teach? What can my students learn from me and not from anyone else?



Planting Seeds to Harvest Fruits – Geneva Gay

Gay speaks to the need for teacher efficacy and empowerment in multicultural education – that is to be competent in and confident about one’s ability to do multicultural teaching. We must find ways to bridge the developmental divides between scholars and novices – accept reality and respect multiple levels and approaches to multicultural teaching.

Peer Modeling & Teaching	Learning from each other; talk about what it means and how it is done
Personal & Professional Journeying	Who we are as people determines the personality of our teaching
Power of Story & Telling Your Own	Multicultural teacher education is a moral enterprise that requires deep personal engagement, commitment, agency, and genuine advocacy
Importance of Reflection	Being critically conscious and analytically reflective about one’s own personal knowledge, beliefs, values, and actions are necessary skills for becoming multicultural educators

We Make the Road by Walking – John Ambrosio

Becoming Multicultural educators results from deliberate study and action over time – intellectual, emotional, moral and pedagogical changes. Ambrosio speaks about the process of maceration; softening and transformation, confronting racial prejudice and cultural bias, isolation and alienation, and recognize turning points.

He outlines critical principles for practice:

- respect what students bring to the classroom
- recognize that learning begins at many starting points
- create open space to explore and reflect on ideas without evaluation or preconceived outcomes
- help students make sense of their own emotional, psychosocial and cultural dilemmas
- develop self-confidence coupled with strong feelings of social responsibility
- work for an equitable and just society



Crystallizing My Multicultural Education Core – Carolyn Jackson

Jackson compares the qualities of multicultural educators to the qualities of a crystal or diamond – clarity, cut, weight, color, and carat. Need to understand the tremendous influence of our behavior on our students. Our sparkle will diminish if we do not cultivate ways to access networks of support. Practicing collaboration will help us investigate our own cultural assumptions and frames of reference. Transformation blends personal and professional development, and extends beyond techniques, materials, and knowledge.

Conversations with Transformative Encounters – Audra L. Gray

Gray describes how her transformation happened through a series of encounters (interaction) that prompted on-going conversations with others and self. She describes these encounters as spiraling and reoccurring. She talks about naming and being named, and how it feels to not be represented in the curriculum or school context. She recommends ethnic-specific literature as a viable experience with ethnic and cultural diversity, critical discourse about issues and crisis, and to translate multicultural principles to personal and professional domains of being. She suggests creating a multi-cultural reading group – collecting texts that reflect multicultural essentials.

Making and Breaking Ethnic Masks – Jeannine E. Dingus

Dingus encourages us to consider how teachers and the school environment contribute to the isolation, invisibility, and marginalization of students of color. One teacher makes a lot of difference in the life of a child. We need to understand processes of ethnic identity development, how they affect teaching and learning, and acquiring strategies to improve the quality of these for both students and teachers.

Masks We Wear:

- Conscious and unconscious masks
- Hide discomfort, pain
- Shield or false identity
- Onion metaphor – peel away layers – letting go of mask
- Act white – mainstream - stereotype
- Teachers wear masks when they do what they do not believe in
- Masks and behaviors vary depending on context; switch masks
- Do teacher educators wear masks?

Steppin' Up and Representin' by Kipchoge N. Kirkland

Kirkland writes about the lessons we learn – specifically about the essential idea that we are morally obligated to promote human dignity, educational equity, and social justice in teaching and interacting with students. Teachings, experiences, ancestral roots, family explorations, loyalties, learning, and loving that she learned from her family as a small child still anchor, nourish, and guide her.

She describes for us the value of cultural expressiveness – the voices of her people/ancestors. See poem on p. 126. She believes its motivation, creation, and content signify the value of telling your own story in your own way that helps others take a glimpse, get a taste, or perhaps catch a bolt of cultural lightning. She believes it is imperative that we explore different facets of our cultures to understand the complexity, depth, and possibilities of our separate and collective existence.

As she becomes more multicultural she learns to step up and represent my sense of cultural family and ethnic kinship and make connections to the larger cultural community. Through her poetry she demonstrates joy, amazement and interest in a personal and passionate. She is learning to collaborate with students, colleagues, mentors and family members. She invites us to step up and represent all that our ethnically diverse students are capable of accomplishing.

Principles for Practice:

- Use alternative means for students and teachers to express themselves
- Learn to use artistic and creative pedagogy to teach ethnic and cultural diversity
- Construct new ideas
- Deconstruct old ones
- Collaborate with others to engage in transformative action on issues of educational equity and social justice
- Be playful, have fun, and enjoy what you do!
- Develop networks, collaborations, and partnerships with others with commitments similar to yours
- Learn how to persevere in the face of opposition
- Remember where you came from

Clearing Pathways for Children to go Forth by S. Purcell Woodard

Woodard reflects on a black author's letters to his newborn son, and how they have inspired him to begin a similar conversation with his own child. He feels that ethnically diverse children face monumental risk when they are placed in the care of educators and others who do not honor their human dignity or fully develop their intellectual potentials. He explores concepts of opposition, resistance, persistence, choosing platforms, and shifting paradigms.

These chapters look at family legacies, and cultural identity. Each of the authors are able to develop voice through poetry. Their poems speak of

Principles for Practice

- Continuous, challenging, necessary and rewarding journey
- The most damaging forms of resistance will be among the most covert
- The more you know about your own privileges and vulnerabilities the better equipped you are to recognize those within your students.
- Reach higher and dig deeper

Professional Actions Echo Personal Experiences

We as teachers need to know how minority students are disadvantaged in majority settings and use instruction techniques to prevent this from happening. We should not overlook the principle that the personal stories, historical backgrounds and family legacies of different ethnic individuals are powerful sources of cultural knowledge for multicultural teaching. In developing the knowledge and skills needed for multicultural teaching, we should study the processes of cultural assimilation, cultural borrowing, and cultural maintenance among different ethnic groups. We should also understand the overt and subtle manifestations of culture and ethnicity, as well as variations within both the majority and minority ethnic groups. Knowing about the ancestral memories and historical places of different ethnic groups is an important part of being an effective multicultural educator.

Who shall teach us what we need to know about ethnic and cultural diversity, and where shall we learn it best? The answer to this question is both simple and profound. We should be taught to be good multicultural educators in our teacher education programs – by many different people, in many different ways, and in many different places.

We learn a great deal as we teach and from whom we teach. In a sense, then, ethnically diverse students are some of the most powerful multicultural teachers. But they should never be placed in the position of being the only such teachers.

Unifying Mind and Soul through Cultural Knowledge and Self-Education by Patricia Espiritu Halagao

Halagao teaches us about balatasan – a poetic form that uses two opposing viewpoints that employs, rhyme, reason, and passion. This style of poetry is rooted in her native language and culture, and allows her to voice the tension she feels as a person of color living in a white world. The opposing verse is perfect for describing the battle between her mind and her soul. As she reflects on her education, she realizes how much she gave up, and wishes she had a teacher who saw the world through her eyes.

Principles of Practice

- Know yourself before you can open yourself to know others
- Study particular personal ethnic stories along with the collective ethnic group stories and experiences
- Conflict can be viewed as a positive mechanism for growth.

Discussion Points from Spring Conversations

Teacher Educator's Work:

- Teaching, Observation & Supervision
- Pre-service teacher development - initial experiences to student teaching
- Walking the talk – show not tell
- Teach how to be a teacher (skill)
- Foster teaching/learning (critical thinking)
- Bring people into the culture of teaching
- Relationships (knowing students) helps us teach
- Teach pedagogy and content knowledge



Quality Multicultural Teachers

- Value identities
- Connect to lived experience
- Hold high expectations for all students
- Stay committed
- View parents and community as valuable
- Provide a safe haven
- Challenge learners and themselves
- Promote active learning
- Promote life experience
- Foster lifelong learners
- Value, love learning.
- Defend rights of students

Lessons:

- Learn and know how people experience their lives
- Move beyond difference to core similarities (what connects us)
- Foster relationships
- Recognize schooling as both *intellectual* and social
- Responsible for all students
- Focus on development

Questions

- How do we prepare teachers to teach children of diverse backgrounds?
- What does it mean to teachers to prepare children who are different from them?
- (Nieto) Are we preparing competent teachers of new majority?
- Are we recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers?
- (Darling-Hammond) Is our definition of highly qualified adequate? Complete?
- Do we teach characteristics of diverse learners, or do we let qualities emerge from inquiry and study of individuals?

For Me Personally:

I have learned the importance of time, fostering real relationships that mean something more than tolerance, acceptance or collegiality. I believe that if we find time for our students to really share their stories, listen to the stories of their peers that we will be better able to prepare them to teach others. This needs to be placed on an equal level with content and methodology. I hope this book club made a difference but I can't be sure. I only know that the door has been opened, a little space created, and seeds have been planted.

*Thank you for spending time with our group today.
We only have a few more meetings this year – I hope you will continue the journey.*