

Cultural Identity In Classrooms

Ideas and Suggestions for a More Inclusive Culture



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To build culture in a classroom the teacher needs to be reflective about their own culture and how it connects to the cultures of their students. Equity and recognizing differences and similarities in humans is fundamental to us learning. A culture of learning, high quality work, and character is essential to students becoming leaders of their own learning. We carry our stories with us. They are weaved into the essence of who we are. The stories are there whether they are told or not. I am an advocate for telling them and appreciating them.

Beginning Reflections:

- The more we know about our students allows us a better perspective of our students to teach and reach them.
- Learning occurs from interactions with others no matter which culture they identify with or the role they occupy within the school.
- It is important to understand where you came from as a person. Teachers must learn who they are first and understand their cultural background. Once the teacher has evaluated and accepted their cultural background they will be better able to create a classroom that will enhance the learning of each student.

How Can Teachers Build and Present Culture in the Classroom?

Think about practices in the classroom

- How are students welcomed and greeted?
- What are the interactions between student-to-teacher and student-to-student?
- What are the rules and who decided on them?
- Have norms been established? If so, by whom?
- Do you favor boys or girls when asking for answers as the teacher?
- How does feedback get distributed? Is it always the same format?
- The teacher must reflect how she responds to each child and may need to reevaluate her beliefs or be more aware of unconscious bias.
- Materials from different cultures, especially books should be highlighted and read often. Books need to be windows and mirrors

Building An Inclusive Culture

- Share your life with your students and be open minded to culture and to changing teaching style to accommodate all learners
- Bring in artifacts that are important to you — encourage your students to do the same

- Create a class artifact that is part of the culture of the classroom
- Teachers must share their stories. Time should be set aside for reflection and stories of themselves and their families.
- Have frequent celebrations in the classroom.
- Explore the world as an adventure.

How Can Teachers Build Their Own Awareness of their Own Culture?

- Learn about your personal culture and background through research and interviews of family members
- Be real with students — be open to discussion and creating a safe environment for talk , questions, and learning
- Share expectations from the very beginning
- Be conscious of first impressions — for yourself and students
- Share stories from friends and family
- Write and share about traditions and celebrations
- Set aside class time for sharing either individually, in small group or community circle type settings.
- Reflect upon the artifacts that are important to you personally and allow students to share the same
- Read nonfiction and fiction about multiple backgrounds

Everyone has bias and becoming more aware of who makes up the classroom can go a long way to developing relationships so high quality instruction and learning occurs.

Remember we are always learning and are models for our students every day.

Tammy L. Breitweiser is a curriculum coach in Northwest Indiana where she is currently dedicated to impacting student achievement in grades 3–6. With more than 24 years of experience, she is a reading advocate who believes in the reading and writing connection. She is working on a collection of short stories. You can connect with Tammy on Twitter (@tlbreit)