

Community in Culture: The Role of Multicultural Education in Elementary School

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Abstract

Racism, bias, and discrimination plagues all areas of society, including the school systems. With the wrong perspective, diversity causes division, and it is impacting students, even in elementary schools. This thesis will examine research about the issue of racism and bias in elementary schools and suggest the solution of cultural integration experiences with practical strategies. It will demonstrate how cultural diversity in instruction encourages students to identify stereotypes, readjust their perspectives of culture, and identify and appreciate their cultural differences. This instruction can be achieved through a variety of methods including virtual field trips, diverse literature, and class activities. The objective is to provide educators with the information and strategies to incorporate cultural diversity into their instruction.

Keywords: Race, racism, colorblindness, cultural diversity, multicultural education, substantive culture learning, diverse literature, cooperative learning groups

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Brief History of Race in Schools

Race and racism have deep roots in America's history, including education. Until the Supreme Court case of *Brown v. the Board of Education*, most black and white students attended separate schools, especially in the southern states (Thattai, 2001). Though these schools were deemed to be "separate but equal" as defined by *Plessy vs. Ferguson*, the quality of education was far from comparable. Black schools were severely under resourced and lacked private or government funding (Pellegrino et al., 2013). True equality in access to education would not occur until schools were desegregated.

This desegregation of schools spurred by *Brown v. the Board of Education* in 1954 was a long process with much resistance, but, by 1980, most of the segregation of schools in the southern states had been eliminated (Thattai, 2001). However, desegregation did not result in the abolishment of discrimination, and African American students were often undervalued academically and treated as inferior by both their teachers and their peers (Metz, 1994). Even now, though there have been significant improvements through the Civil Rights movement and other efforts to improve education, African American students still experience both active and passive acts of prejudice and discrimination in school.

Race and Racism in Schools

Race and Child Development

Some may believe race is not an issue in the lives of children, but it is prevalent, especially in their developmental stages. Even from a very young age, children begin to develop concepts of race, as infants of six months are able to categorize people they encounter based on their physical appearance (Winkler, 2009). Young children learn from what they see and

experience, and they can see the physical differences in people and develop understandings based on that. This is continued as children get older, and children as young as three years old can demonstrate an understanding of what race is and what its implications are (Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). As children grow and develop, they begin to understand the meaning of race and how it can be applied to their lives. Not only do young children understand what race is, they also recognize its importance. This is demonstrated when children, beginning around the age of three or four, use race and ethnicity as ways to make sense and meaning of the world around them. Race is not just something children consider; it is a concept they use to shape their social understanding (Ausdale & Feagin, 2001).

As children develop, they learn by observing societal influence to understand appropriate social behavior, and society is constantly indicating that race is something of importance and must be recognized (Winkler, 2009). As they observe racial issues in society, they can develop some of the biases prevalent in their culture without understanding the implications of those biases. This can be seen especially in an area with a high percentage of a particular ethnicity. In these cases, children may draw conclusions which claim what is familiar to them as superior, as they learn to recognize the present social categories in their own environment (Winkler, 2009). Children observe the social norms that favor a particular ethnicity and develop a bias toward the favored group of society. By believing one ethnicity is superior to others, children can develop bias and prejudiced tendencies can become evident in the classroom. (Winkler, 2009).

A student's bias can be displayed in the classroom in many ways, whether it be a racial slur directed at students, a race-centered joke, or refusing to work with a student of a particular ethnicity. All these cases, regardless of the meaning behind them, can cause issues, because whether or not it is intentional, racist comments and actions cause harm to those they were

directed towards (Ausdale & Feagin, 2001). Examples of these racist behaviors are shown in a study conducted by a group of researchers who interviewed various students, teachers, and parents at multiple elementary schools in Australia. The researchers asked the students to imagine they decided they would like to become Chinese, and some of the students responded they would not want to be Chinese because “they all look the same”, “it would be a bit freaky”, and they look “scary” (Priest et.al., 2016, p. 818). The students recognized their physical differences and made assumptions, stereotypes, or negatives comments about another ethnicity based on physical attributes.

Lewis (2001) conducted a study in an elementary school in which a student told the researcher that another student called his friend a “black boy” (p. 789). When the researcher asked the student who made the comment why he did it, he recognized it was wrong because it was racist, and he showed he understood what he said and was using it to be discriminatory of the boy to purposefully hurt him (Lewis, 2001). Not only did the student recognize the comment he made was wrong, but he also acknowledged it was a racist comment he was using to intentionally hurt another student. These are just a few instances of discriminatory behavior or negative racial comments that demonstrate the presence of the issue of race in education, specifically elementary schools. The presence of racism and discrimination in schools shows the necessity for parents, teachers, and school communities to take responsibility to positively influence the child as they are some of the most important influences in a child’s life and who they will look to understand how to engage in social relationships.

The Role of Parents and Teachers

Parents and teachers are some of the most influential people in a child’s life because they are often directly involved in the daily interactions of their children, and children look to their

parents and teachers as models for speech, behavior, and social interactions. The way a parent raises their child has a strong influence, because parents are the ones who care for children and their physical, emotional, and cognitive development as they grow up (Ceka & Murati, 2016). Much of the development and learning of a child is facilitated by parents, as they instruct their children, not only in academic topics, but also thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors. If a parent is not intentional in addressing race, or has racist tendencies themselves, children may be influenced to think in a similar way.

Similarly, teachers impact their students through the way they teach, manage the classroom, and model behaviors. The way a teacher interacts with students is crucial because they influence a student's desire and motivation to attend school, how they perform in school, and how they think about and interact with others (Fredriksen & Rhodes, 2004). Next to parents, teachers are the adult influences who spend the most time with children, so they also have a tremendous impact on the development of a student. It is critical for teachers to provide a safe and welcoming classroom environment that encourages students to grow both in their intellectual abilities and their moral character (Sari, 2013). However, in some cases, teachers and parents fail to properly address issues of race and discrimination and instead resolve to colorblindness, color muteness, or ignoring the topic altogether.

Ineffective “solutions”

Colorblindness

Colorblindness is one of the strategies parents, teachers, and school communities use in an attempt to avoid the issue of race in the classroom. It is based on the idea that racial groups and differences should not be considered when any decision is being made or action is taken (Apfelbaum et.al., 2012). By this notion, differences are not recognized in the ethnicity and

culture of students, and “sameness” is the prevalent theme. Even in a study conducted at a more ethnically diverse school, teachers decided to take a color-blind approach where they focused on equality and sameness in humanity instead of recognizing the reality of racial and cultural differences (Walton et.al., 2014). The issue with the colorblind approach is that students are taught to only recognize their similarities, while their differences are ignored. This still allowed the issue of racism to be present in the school as racial issues and acts of discrimination that occurred in their community, and even their school, were not discussed (Walton et.al., 2014). By not intentionally addressing the racial problems occurring in their own schools and communities, teachers failed to demonstrate the issues of racism and discrimination as a whole.

Color muteness

While color blindness is emphasizing “sameness”, color muteness is refusing to talk about race at all. In a study conducted at various elementary schools, researchers found that some teachers and parents took a colorblind or colormute approach and just avoided talking about racism and its importance altogether (Priest et.al., 2016). Instead of addressing the racial issues that arose in schools, some parents and teachers choose to ignore the topic.

Some of the reasoning behind this is many parents, even those of racial minorities, thought their preschoolers were not old enough to discuss issues of race and discrimination (Winkler, 2009). Other parents even claimed the issue of race is not prevalent, and instead, it is the attitudes of people of color that is the issue (Lewis, 2001). By not addressing the issue, students will not understand why racism is wrong and will see no need to modify any discriminatory behavior. By remaining passive about the importance and meaning of race, racial stereotypes and discriminatory thoughts and behaviors are further emphasized and seen as acceptable in society (Priest et.al., 2016).

Shallow Explanations and Redirection

In some cases, teachers and parents do address the issue of racism, however, they do it without proper preparation or understanding of how to intentionally discuss race. In the study conducted at various Australian elementary schools, the researchers found that at some of the schools, the students were encouraged to recognize difference in an attempt to normalize diversity and allow the children to see they are all equal, regardless of race, ethnicity, or culture (Walton et.al., 2014). The point of recognizing differences was for them to see how they are all similar, instead of appreciating and understanding the importance of their differences.

Other teachers taught cultural stereotypes of traditions and language instead of directly addressing the issue of racism (Priest et.al., 2016). Teachers must be careful when incorporating materials to determine that they have the proper understanding of the culture they represent. The occurrence of ignoring and redirecting racial issues demonstrates the need for teachers to engage in direct discussions about issues concerning racism and discrimination, both in schools that are culturally diverse and those where one ethnicity is more dominant (Walton et.al., 2014). This direct discussion encourages the need for cultural diversity as teachers address race through open discussion and other educational strategies that incorporates multiculturalism and cultural appreciation, allowing students to recognize, appreciate, and understand their differences instead of ignoring them.

Cultural Diversity in Education

Importance in Education

Integrating cultural diversity into curriculum and classroom practices is vital to instruct students in a way which encourages them to appreciate their own cultural identity as well as those of others. In a survey sent out to various teachers, the majority agreed that culturally

responsive teaching is important because all students should learn how, as acting members of society, they have a responsibility to take action to prevent discrimination and prejudiced attitudes and behaviors in their community (Phuntsog, 2001). Multicultural teaching is a way to combat the occurrence of racism in school and show students how to be respectful and loving towards others. Whether or not students live in diverse communities, they will encounter diversity in their lives, so it is important for them to learn how to recognize and appreciate diversity to see the differences which make everyone unique (Borkett, 2018). Cultural diversity is not limited to those who live in diverse areas, and it can be applicable to all students in all communities. It is important to introduce cultural diversity to students early in their education, because if children are continuously taught to appreciate culture and diversity throughout their education, they will carry those ideals with them and grow and mature into individuals who recognize the importance of diversity in society and take action to stand up against racism and cultural injustices (Borkett, 2018). Because of their role in equipping students with information that influences their thoughts and actions, schools are crucial components in fighting racism. By showing students how to encourage diversity and stand against racism, schools can incite a change not only in the school community, but also society (Forrest, 2016). This shows how educators and school systems have a responsibility to instruct students well and encourage them to support cultural diversity as active members of their society.

Educational Strategies

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is characterized by intentionality and directness in questions and conversations concerning race and ethnicity. Its purpose is to both intentionally fight against racism and intolerance to cultivate cultural appreciation and to change education as a whole and

how students impact their communities and the world (Dyson & Genishi, 1994). The goal of multicultural education is to transform the classroom to prioritize discussion and critical thinking and to support diversity in all areas of education. Instead of stereotyping cultures and asking shallow questions about race in an effort to emphasize sameness, multicultural education methods provide for more opportunities to openly and intentionally discuss culture and its importance (Dyson & Genishi, 1994). Students are encouraged to ask questions and engage in discussion as it helps them to understand their own culture and those of others. Teachers seek to accomplish this by integrating information and experiences of the fight against racism directly into the curriculum (Au, 2009). By teaching and discussing the historical and current fight against racism and discrimination, students can be encouraged to engage in the fight themselves.

Multicultural Training for Students

Another way to intentionally incorporate cultural diversity is to actively encourage diversity and inclusion through a multicultural training to positively impact the school's cultural environment (Nishina et.al., 2019). This training introduces prosocial activities which are then incorporated into classrooms as a way to encourage diversity within the group. Having a diverse classroom encourages inclusion and positive social interaction, but some schools, depending on location, are predominantly one ethnicity, and as a result, students may not have the opportunity to explore and develop their cultural identity (Nishina et.al., 2019). Multicultural training is important for students to understand and appreciate the cultures of those around them, but also for them to appreciate their own culture and ethnicity. It is integral for this training to occur in elementary schools because both the elementary school and the secondary school periods are crucial in the development of social and offering intervention during these times will allow for a positive impact on student peer groups (Nishina et.al., 2019). By introducing multicultural

training while students are still young, they can learn to be confident in who they are and their own ethnic identity. This confidence in identity will prepare students to be active members of their communities as they engage in ethnically diverse settings (Rivas-Drake et.al., 2017). If the strategies are introduced while students are young, it will correlate with their stages of social development and continue into their middle and high school education.

The method of multicultural training involves student-focused instruction and activities, where social interactions are encouraged to produce acceptance and friendship between the students (Nishina et.al., 2019). By intentionally interacting with peers, students can learn about each other and develop positive relationships with each other. In addition to this, researchers claim that supporting positive social interaction and problem-solving during group work can also encourage students to appreciate culture and diversity, be sensitive to others' thoughts and emotions, and support an inclusive school environment (Nishina et.al., 2019). Not only does it intend to foster friendship and acceptance, but it also hopes to develop sensitivity to others' thoughts and emotions. In addition to student-centered activities, multicultural trainings also involve a presentation of techniques to resolve conflicts and solve real-world problems for students to learn through modeling those techniques and behaviors (Nishina et.al., 2019).

This presentation of skills places responsibility on the teacher as well, as they are required to demonstrate the skills students are to model. For this reason, teachers also need to be trained to facilitate multicultural training with the students. Teachers must receive the appropriate preparation because the lack of understanding of diversity between students and teachers is demonstrated to influence students' social skills and interactions in school (Nishina et.al., 2019). They must be properly instructed to incorporate diverse activities to present them accurately to students. Training is also necessary for teachers in relation to the school

community, as the school must be equipped and trained to approach multiculturalism with the right attitude to encourage diversity and cultural appreciation in their classrooms (Banks & Banks, 2019). Schools need to partner with their teachers and work cohesively with them to provide the appropriate information, training, and strategies to implement multicultural training with the students.

Multicultural Training for Teachers

Training for teachers involves connecting with their students individually to learn about their cultural background and values. To properly engage in multicultural education, the instructor must understand the cultural differences and what instruction means to different people. This is demonstrated in schools that include both students with individualistic and collectivist values. Instruction in the eyes of individualistic society and collectivistic societies are very different. For example, in Latino culture contributing to the group and community is valued more than one's individual success (Rothstein & Trumbull, 2008). Variations in values across different cultures indicates the way teachers manage their classrooms should differ depending on the culture values of their students. To properly facilitate discussion and model prosocial skills, teachers must understand their students and their cultural identities to implement values and practices in which all students will engage and understand.

This can also be illustrated through a teacher's preparation to engage in multicultural education through music. In a study conducted with music educators, researchers found it is important for teachers to not only teach from one perspective or culture, but to integrate cultural, historical, and social importance of the music piece in instruction (Howard, 2020). For this to be implemented correctly, teachers must research the music pieces to understand the historical and cultural significance of the piece to properly share it with their students. Through the proper

preparation and research, cultural appropriation and stereotyping can be avoided. Instead, as teachers accurately present culturally diverse music, students can develop empathy and sensitivity through the emotions and responses to their interactions with culturally diverse music (Howard, 2020). School systems have a responsibility to properly educate their teachers to prepare them to implement multicultural strategies in their classrooms.

Substantive Culture Learning

Another method of incorporating cultural diversity to prevent racism and discrimination is a strategy called substantive culture learning. Instead of showing students the stereotypical ideas of the traditions and customs of cultures around the world, teachers dive deep with the students to discuss the beliefs, systems, and ideas of world cultures in relation to their own. It is important for students to develop a real understanding of local and global cultures because without it they are unable to understand the importance of real-world issues and their cultural, economic, and political implications (Merryfield, 2004). By doing this, students are learning more than just the superficial facts about a culture and are instead learning how different cultures play a role in present society. This develops cultural intelligence in students as they learn to appreciate different cultures for their people, values, and societal contributions (Owen, 2017). When students are instructed in at a young age they can continue to develop and use their knowledge to make informed comments about other cultures and refrain from using cultural and racial stereotypes.

To accomplish this, teachers and students focus on social interaction, gender roles, and characteristics of society, instead of focusing solely on stereotypical cultural representations of dress, food, music, and other cultural traditions (Merryfield, 2004). Discussing the traditions or clothing of a culture is only beneficial when it is paired with intentional discussion about all

aspects of culture. In substantive culture learning, students learn about the foundations of the societies and their people, rather than just what they look like or eat. Though celebrations, attire, and food are all part of a culture, they should not be the sole focus, and that is what teachers seek to emphasize through this practice. The instruction involves teaching various perspectives, identifying and addressing stereotypes, using primary sources from the culture being studied, teaching about prejudice and power in different regions, and teaching dynamics of various cultures (Merryfield, 2004). In doing this, students can truly understand what people of a culture may believe, what they value, and how they view societal issues. They can see that people in other cultures than their own have different values, and it will allow them to evaluate their own perspectives to see how they are similar or different. Students can recognize and appreciate both their similarities and their differences.

Other Methods

There are countless other ways to incorporate cultural diversity into instruction depending on the students, school context, and resources provided to teachers. One non-traditional method is a program called TWI (Two-Way Immersion). This is a bilingual program that involves full immersion of students into a classroom where they do not speak the native language, to help students to develop bilingualism and cultural intelligence, as well as greater academic achievement (de Jung, 2016). This program can be beneficial to both the native and non-native speakers of the class as they learn from each other, not only about language, but also culture, values, and beliefs. Through TWI, bilingual students learn about each other's culture, have beneficial and influential cultural experiences, and grow to understand their own culture too.

For the TWI program to be effective, the teachers and parents must work together to ensure that the program is productive and beneficial for the students. A study was conducted with teachers and parents at a TWI school, and researchers found the teacher often struggles with the social class differences and motivations of parents. In an interview, the teacher mentioned that the English-speaking parents were often well-educated and involved, while the Spanish-speaking parents were often hard to reach to discuss their child's needs and progress (Chaparro, 2020). This shows the responsibility of the teachers to intentionally develop relationships with parents of all students involved in the program, as the involvement of the teachers affects the performance of the students. Teachers should encourage the parents to be involved in the education of their children and work to provide them with resources or trainings if necessary. Though they had different motivations and reasoning, both the English-speaking and Spanish-speaking parents recognized the benefits of the TWI program and the importance for the future of the lives of their children (Chaparro, 2020). The parents all demonstrated they understood why the program was important, and with the work and diligence of teachers, they can be equipped to help their children to succeed.

Another method of integrating cultural diversity in a unique way is through critical multicultural education. Multicultural education, as discussed previously, can be described as the integration of many different cultural perspectives into curriculum and instruction and is crucial in combatting race and racism in schools (Wiggin & Watson-Vandiver, 2019). This can apply to many different school systems and can be accomplished through various instructional strategies or curriculum modifications. However, critical multicultural education is a bit more specific, as it stands against the dominance of one culture or ethnicity and seeks to extinguish the power

difference between races (Wiggan & Watson-Vandiver, 2019). This is accomplished through directly focusing the power distance and issues of white supremacy that is often seen in society.

One study of critical multiculturalism was conducted at an all-African American private school. Because of the school's population, the teachers and staff made the decision to implement critical multiculturalism by using an African-centered curriculum, as opposed to a European -centered one. By viewing history from an African-centered perspective, the curriculum focuses on the historical fact in a unique way (Wiggan & Watson-Vandiver, 2019). This change in the curriculum allows the students to take pride in their heritage while learning about historical facts. The teachers do not change the facts of history, rather they describe the events from a different perspective. This pride in heritage transfers to education, as students who were interviewed responded by saying that this style of learning provided them with inspiration and confidence in their educational experiences (Wiggan & Watson-Vandiver, 2019). Students demonstrated excitement and passion in their learning which allowed them to perform better academically. Though this strategy may not be as effective in other school settings, it worked incredibly well for students in this study as they showed an increase in pride for their heritage and an improvement in academic performance.

Practical Implementation

Implementation Strategies

Diversity in Implementation

From multicultural trainings to two-way immersion programs, there are many ways to strategically teach about culture and race as a means to combat racism and discrimination. Each strategy has its own requirements, and it is up to the school systems to determine which strategy best suits the needs of the students. This requires school systems to work together cohesively to

find a solution that best suits the students' needs. When teachers collaborate with the administration, they can identify issues in the school and work together to incite positive change within the school (Anrig, 2015). This also applies to the implementation of the various strategies. Schools can integrate diverse curriculum and literature, participate in immersive field trips experiences, invite guest speakers or students to share their personal stories, or any combination of the previously mentioned. The school systems can work cohesively with their teachers to find a strategy that best suits the interests and needs of the students in the school.

Use of Story

One method used to implement culturally diverse strategies is using personal stories. Humans have always been captivated by stories, whether oral or written, and stories have power to evoke emotion, stir up thoughts, and elicit a response. Stories are unique because "The human capacity for intersubjectivity allows the audience of a story to build shared meaning even from distal events and others' experiences" (Landrum et.al., 2019). Stories allow individuals to understand something and relate it to their own personal experiences, and they can find themselves in the events and characters, even if they are seemingly unrelatable. This is something that can be integrated into normal class activities, and it can be started as early as kindergarten. The stories do not have to be long or complex, it could be something as simple as presenting an "all-about me" poster at the beginning of the school year (Cole & Verwayne, 2018). In this poster, students can identify physical, cultural, and personal things which make them unique, and can proudly share about themselves with the rest of the class. Through this activity, students can recognize each other's differences in a positive environment where they can be encouraged to love and appreciate their unique qualities and differences.

In addition to students sharing personal stories, teachers can facilitate an intentional storytelling time by inviting guest speakers to come and share with the class. This could be someone who has been a victim of racism and discrimination, someone who shares about their own culture and traditions, or someone who has had other cultural experiences. This is an inexpensive way for students to hear first-hand information about a culture or experience. These guest speakers could be connections from other parts of the world, or even students' parents or grandparents (Au, 2009). By intentionally making relationships and connections, teachers can bring many different people into the classroom to share their experiences. Through virtual options, the guest speaker does not even have to be physically present in the class to share their stories (Au, 2009). Through online platforms like Zoom, Teams, and Facetime, students can connect with people living in different parts of the world and learn about their personal cultural experiences. Incorporating guest speakers into class activities is provides a unique learning experience for students, because when a guest speaker comes to the classroom and delivers a presentation, it provides a relatable and interactive learning experience that cannot be attained through simply reading a textbook (Mullins, 2001). Students may read about the information in a textbook but seeing and hearing someone speak about the same topic from their own experience and perspective provides a more personal and memorable learning experience.

As teachers prepare for guest speakers to come to their classroom, they must be strategic to provide the most beneficial learning experience for their students. To do this, the topic the guest speaker covers should meet an objective and correlate with what the students are learning about in class. This means that it is crucial to meet and correspond with the guest speaker beforehand to ensure that the topic that the guest speaker is covering is directly related to what is scheduled for that time frame (Mullins, 2001). The teachers present the information, then the

guest speaker is used to further demonstrate the importance of the information in a personal context and allow the students to make sense and meaning of what they've learned. In addition to meeting with and preparing the guest speaker, teachers must also properly prepare their students. To do this, they must discuss with the students how to properly welcome, interact with, and show respect when a guest speaker comes to the classroom (Mullins, 2001). This can be another learning opportunity for students as they learn how to interact and respond to a guest speaker's presentation. Not only is it an opportunity for them to make sense and meaning about cultural diversity from a perspective of personal experience, but it also encourages them to practice appropriate interactions with others.

Diverse Literature

Stories delivered orally can have great impact on students, and this holds true for written word as well. Reading literature, whether it be fiction, biography, or poetry, can have a great impact on the readers, encouraging them to think deeply about the struggles the characters face and develop connections with their emotions and experiences. Stories also hold great importance in relation to culture. In many cases, the way individuals deliver or write stories are great indications of their place in culture (Dyson & Genishi, 2001). By reading stories written from a variety of perspectives, students can learn about the importance of culture and understand what it means to them. This method of cultural integration is effective because in reading literature, the characters come to life, and they bring new ideas and perspectives for students to consider (Dyson & Genishi, 2001). Reading literature allows students to personally connect to the characters in the story as they are able to see from their perspectives and understand their motives. This understanding can lead to development of empathy and a sensitivity to others, as they relate to the characters in the story in their culture and experiences (Budd, 2016). Students

learn to recognize the importance of culture, how to think from various perspectives, and how to empathize with those who have a different culture and perspective than their own.

Because of the nature of reading stories as a means of engagement and learning, this method can be instituted in younger classes, even before the students learn how to read, through read-alouds or audiobooks. Young learners can be introduced to culture through engaging in a story, as they learn to wonder and think about themselves in the context of their own culture, what motivates their thoughts and actions, and how they have both similarities and differences with their classmates and others around them (Budd, 2016). Even at a young age, children can be taught to appreciate similarities and differences, and these beliefs can grow with them as they continue to explore new ideas and perspectives through literature. As they continue to read diverse literature, they develop greater understanding about the origin of a particular culture, the relation of culture to specific topics, and how cultures have changed over time (Budd, 2016).

Before teachers integrate diverse literature into instruction, they must properly prepare themselves by strategically selecting a book that correlates with course material, doing the necessary research, and identifying the purpose of reading the piece. To accomplish this, teachers must identify their goal in incorporating the literature into instruction and ensure it relates to the learning objectives of the lesson (Budd, 2016). This allows students to think about cultural diversity in relation to the topic of learning. Once they have selected a text, teachers must research the culture, with its perspectives, history, traditions, and context, to properly incorporate the material for the purpose of cultural appreciation (Dieterich, 1972). This is to ensure that there is no misrepresentation of the culture that is the focus of the literature, and that the students develop an accurate view of the meaning of culture. In this, instructors should be very clear with students when introducing the text and explain how the text is just one representation of culture

from an author's perspective. Culture is not defined by one perspective or opinion, it is a combination of many different views (Purcell, 1988). By taking an initiative to be intentional in discussion with students, teachers can help to develop genuine cultural appreciation in the classroom.

Diverse Materials and Activities

In addition to incorporating diversity into literature used in class, diverse materials can be used in all areas of study to create a class environment that encourages cultural appreciation. As previously stated, these materials and activities should be used in addition to intentional and direct instruction and discussion about race and the issue of discrimination. To accomplish this, diverse activities and material must be strategically paired with topics of focus to further emphasize a concept. Teachers can keep this in mind when constructing their classrooms to provide opportunities for cultural exploration in play areas. This can involve including culturally diverse posters, crafts, food, and materials for dress up (Borkett, 2018). This allows students to learn to appreciate cultural diversity through physical interaction and exploration and can allow them to make sense and meaning of the instruction. By providing a safe and comfortable learning environment, teachers can allow student to discover new things and learn as they play (Zosh et.al., 2017). Teachers can grant students the freedom to experience this for themselves, while gently reminding them the materials are simply one aspect of culture, and that they should continue to research cultures and traditions to learn more.

This encouragement to learn and discover relates to another activity that can be used intentionally in class to foster a culturally appreciative environment, which is project-based learning (Nishina et.al., 2019). This allows students to explore culture on their own rather than just hearing or reading about it. In project-based learning, students are faced with a real-world

issue, and they must work together in groups to discover a solution (Revelle et.al., 2020).

Students can take what they learned about race and culture in instruction and apply it to an actual societal issue to see how culture impacts all areas of life. In this, students are also encouraged to collaborate effectively with the other students in their group and consider and respect the perspectives of their peers and they work together to find a solution. Not only do students learn about the application of culture to real-world issues, but they also cultivate a culture of appreciation and respect within their classroom (Revelle et.al., 2020).

Cooperative Learning Groups

As demonstrated through project-based learning, group collaboration can encourage cultural appreciation between peers, and this is further demonstrated through the use of cooperative learning groups. This can be instituted in younger elementary grades, as it encourages positive social interactions with a focus on a common goal (Cousik, 2015). As children grow and learn, they will develop social skills and a readiness to work with those who are different than them. When first forming the cooperative groups, teachers can be strategic to place students of many different backgrounds and cultures in a group to encourage students to use their individual talents and perspectives to work together and accomplish a goal as a cohesive team. This allows students to feel both group and individual achievement as they work together with their peers, while also bringing their individuality to the group (Cousik, 2015). This can be beneficial for promoting cultural appreciation as groups can recognize the cultural difference that attributes to individuality and unique strengths.

One specific example of implementation of cooperative learning is through the “Jigsaw classroom”, in which students are divided into groups and assigned a piece of the lesson and their goal is to share the different pieces and make sense and meaning of all the pieces together

(Grapin et.al., 2019, pg. 157). To accomplish this activity effectively, students must collaborate effectively, so each piece of the puzzle is clear, and they are able to interpret the material accurately. This type of effective collaboration produces positive social interactions and interpersonal skills, appreciation of a variety of perspectives, and conflict resolution skills (Grapin et.al., 2019, pg. 157). By learning how to engage in appropriate social interactions and view situations from various perspectives, students can appreciate their differences while still working towards a common goal in the assignment.

This strategy of cooperative small group learning can also be translated to whole-group discussion, where the small-scale collaboration is applied to the entire class as they discuss topics regarding race, culture, and other issues in society. This is demonstrated through a strategy called the respecting diversity (RD) program. This was investigated through a study at five elementary schools in British Columbia, where the RD program was implemented with the purpose of allowing students to recognize their own strengths and weaknesses, understanding the benefits of cultural diversity within an educational context, and fostering cultural appreciation (Katz, 2008). In this program, there is a focus on the classroom community and allowing students to recognize their differences, both their unique strengths and weaknesses within their class (Katz, 2008). Students and teachers engage in open discussion, which allows students to contribute their gifts and abilities to discussion. This cultivates an aspect of self-awareness while recognizing and appreciating their cultural and academic differences from their peers.

In-Person and Virtual Field Trips

The implementation strategies previously discussed involves bringing literature, speakers, or materials into the classroom, but the focus of field trips is to allow children to leave the comfort of their classroom and fully immerse themselves in a new cultural experience. Field trips

are important in encouraging cultural diversity because a culturally enriching field trip can increase empathy, encourage acceptance, and foster a greater appreciation for culture and the arts (Greene et.al., 2014). Through being fully immersed in the art of topic of study, they can develop a greater appreciation for the piece itself and the culture it came from. Through surveying students who participated in a culturally enriching field trip, researchers found the students exhibited more flexible thinking and higher levels of tolerance following the field trip (Greene et.al., 2014). This shows the cultural immersive experience of the field trip encouraged the students to be more culturally appreciative in their response.

Culturally immersive field trips can take many different shapes and forms, and teachers can utilize their own communities to find culturally enriching experiences for their students. One elementary teacher in Philadelphia used the knowledge of her own community to allow her students to explore both culture and economics. She took her students to culturally diverse markets, including the Chinese, Korean, and Indian markets. At each stop she instructed the students to look carefully to see what products are sold and what foods were most commonly found (Gomez, 2010). Through doing this, students could identify which foods were most valued and consumed in each culture and could compare the markets to each other and other markets they were familiar with. In constructing this activity, the teacher was intentional and had an objective for the students to meet. She took the students to many different markets as a way to prepare them to be able to create their own market in the school. Following the various market stops and drawing on what they learned, students worked together to create their own market inspired by those they visited (Gomez, 2010). In doing this, students used their experiences to incorporate what they learned from their culturally enriching field trips into a school project.

For schools that may not have access to the type of culturally enriching field trips previously described, there is also the option of going on a virtual field trip from the comfort of the classroom. In a study conducted to determine the effectiveness of virtual field trips, students used Google Expeditions to explore different cities around the world and compare it to their own (Han, 2021). Pairing the virtual cultural exploration with an objective gave students a task and focus to their field trip. By using virtual technology, students were able to see things and go places that would be inaccessible if they were to go in person (Han, 2021). Students were able to explore cultural differences and similarities in communities in a unique way through technology. This provides students who are limited in options for cultural immersion with an opportunity to learn to appreciate culture and diversity from within their own classrooms.

Discussion and Implications

The issue of race and discrimination school is very real, as students observe societal norms and influences of peers, teachers, parents, and the media. Instead of simply ignoring the issue or focusing on “sameness”, teachers need to partner with their school staff to integrate intentional and direct educational strategies that promote cultural diversity, whether it be through multicultural training, substantive culture learning, or other methods. These methods encourage students to move past the superficial knowledge about culture into the deep, real meaning about the importance of diversity and how it relates to them personally. Teachers can implement cultural diversity strategies practically through the inclusion of diverse literature, guest speakers, class materials and activities, and in-person and virtual field trips. These activities engage students and allow them to experience diversity rather than simply hear about it. Through these strategies and their implementation, schools, teachers, and students can work together to transform the educational environment to be a space where students appreciate both their cultural

similarities and differences, are proud of their cultural heritage, and actively work to prevent racism and discrimination in education.

This review demonstrates the prevalence of the issues of racism in school, as well as the necessity for teachers and schools to take action to stand against it. Teachers and staff can take action by educating themselves in culturally diverse instruction and implementation strategies and practicing those that best suit their students' needs and learning environment. They can conduct further research to determine other practical ways to implement culturally diverse teaching with the purpose of addressing and preventing racism and discrimination. By documenting their own studies and sharing with others, teachers can collaborate with and equip other teachers and schools to implement cultural diversity in education as efficiently as possible. Through this practice, school systems can work to change the culture of education and cultivate an environment where all students, regardless of ethnicity, values, and religion, are provided with an education that equips them to use their unique skills, abilities, and knowledge to positively impact those around them.

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