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TE825

Critical Reflection Part 3

After immersing in the new information learned from *Un-Standardizing Curriculum* and the additional assigned readings, I have found myself experiencing an internal struggle of what I used to believe as effective teaching. Some questions I am wrestling with include: How can I logistically instill transformative intellectual knowledge in students while abiding administration expectations that solely focus on “teaching to the standards”? While planning for a student-centered curriculum, what ways can I reach the Filipino or Micronesian community in a safe and effective way? One approach I found helpful was how Christi “took ideas she wanted to teach and figured out creative ways to connect them with what she had to teach” (Sleeter & Carmona, 2017, p.51). This is a good starting point for someone who is still trying to grasp the idea that I have a lot to unlearn and whose perception of the world has been skewed by textbooks and other people’s ideologies of the world.

In my previous years, I discovered my class demographic through their health cards where parents stated their families address, background, and occupations. From this information alone, I created stereotypes of students without even meeting them, and made preconceived assumptions about their families. I lumped the students who were Filipino to be “just like me” and the students whose second language was English would “have difficulty with reading and writing”. Looking back, I feel awful for disregarding their cultures and their ethnic individuality. Jennifer A. Mott Smith states the importance of structuring her class so that “immigrant students are encouraged to explore their racial-ethnic identities in their writing” (2008). Had I approached

diversity in this way, I could have placed an equal value on students' knowledge and encouraged them to engage in conversations about diversity with their peers.

Teresa L. McCarty's *Evaluating Images of Groups in Your Curriculum* addresses the way Native Americans are typically represented and her attempt to challenge these stereotypes in a critical and reflective way. Her statement that "We should not assume that it is their responsibility to teach non-Native classmates about indigenous people" (McCarty, 2008, p.180) is relevant for all groups of people which is another strategy I failed to recognize as detrimental when teaching a class of Black students. When the given curriculum did not allow for teaching diversity, I relied on students to share their stories to gain a better understanding of their life while sharing vague details about myself. As a result, students did not trust me, and often times displayed behavioral issues. This week has taught me to use the resources and people around me to learn about unfamiliar communities and also understand that each student comes with their personal story that are far different than another student who is the same race or group.

The importance of beginning discussions about race, power, and injustice at an early age have been solidified and has reshaped my philosophy of teaching. When my first-grade Black student points to a picture of an Asian person and asks me, "Is that your sister?", I should use this as an opportunity to question and identify misconceptions rather than ignore these comments. By doing this, I hope to create an antiracist space where "community members discuss their own life experiences and perspectives with the class" (McCarty, 2008, p. 183). Teachers are not perfect, and I will continue to evolve and grow alongside my students throughout future years. These readings will impact my practice by ensuring that I am exploring multiple perspectives of groups of people in order to re-envision the world in ways that "benefit historically oppressed communities and support justice" (Sleeter & Carmona, 2008, p. 79).

References

- McCarty, T. L. (2008). "Evaluating images of groups in your curriculum." In *Everyday Antiracism: Getting Real About Race in School*. The New Press: New York. (pp.180-185)
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