

Cooperative Learning and Multicultural Education

Classroom Strategies & Techniques to Facilitate Student Learning for Students from Diverse Backgrounds

What happens to a dream deferred? Langston Hughes

W. E. B. Du Bois posed the question “Does the Negro need separate schools?”

Du Bois posed the question after his assessment of the quality of education African Americans were receiving in the nation’s public schools.

*Du Bois’ assessment of the schools was that they were poor

*Hmmm..... Does that sound familiar in 2003?

*African American parents are not the only parents dissatisfied with the public schools.

*There are now special schools for African-American males—
sparking heated debates.

*After decades of fighting for integrated schools, why the interest in separate schools.

*What about separate but unequal?

*How do we solve the problems of poor student performance on local, regional, and national tests?

*Ladson-Billings, in her book, *The Dreamkeepers*, states that many teachers, Caucasian and African Americans, feel ill-prepared meet the needs of African American students.

*Ladson-Billings wrote her book with using different voices--that of a scholar and researcher, teacher, woman, parent, and community member.

*Ladson-Billings holds a Ph.D. from Stanford.

*Ladson-Billings poses this question: Does culture matter?

*Ladson-Billings maintains that the pedagogical instruction leads to “intellectual death.”

*Over the past 10 years there has been increased interest in looking at the academic performance of students who are culturally, ethnically, racially, and linguistically diverse (Ladson-Billings).

*Culturally relevant teaching, according Dr. L B, uses student culture...to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture.

*Cultural relevance moves language to include other aspects of student and school culture, according to Dr. LB.

*Primary aim of culturally relevant teaching is to assist in the development of a “relevant black personality—allowing AA students to choose academic excellence & still identify w/ African & African American culture.

*Culturally relevant teaching is a pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally & politically thru use of cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes, Dr. LB.

*Culturally relevant teachers perceive their teaching as an art, Dr. LB.

*They demonstrate a connectedness w/ all of their students and encourage the same connectedness between the students.

Seeing Color, Seeing Culture

*According to Dr. LB, it is okay to see both color and culture.

*Dr. LB. “states that many White teachers are uncomfortable with race differences in the classroom.

*Dr. LB further states many teachers state “I don’t really see color, I just see children.”

*Dr. LB states that these attempts at colorblindness mask a “dysconscious racism.”

*Teachers w/ culturally relevant practices have high self-esteem and a high regard for others, Dr. LB.

*Teachers w/ culturally relevant practices see themselves as part of the community, see teaching as giving back to the community, and encourage their students to do the same, Dr. LB

*Teachers with culturally relevant practices see teaching as an art and themselves as artists, Dr. LB.

*Teachers with culturally relevant practices believe that all students can succeed, Dr. LB.

*Teachers with culturally relevant practices help students make connections between their community, national, and global identities, Dr. LB.

*Teachers with culturally relevant practices see teaching as “digging knowledge out of students,” Dr. LB.

*Campbell presents a chapter on cooperative learning & multicultural education.

*”Teachers cannot assume that the home has nurtured in students positive attitudes toward school and others,” Campbell.

*Cooperative learning is a high energy approach to teaching. Thus, it capitalizes upon all of the student’s energy.

*There are a number of teaching strategies to encourage social interaction--learning buddies, jigsaw study, literature response groups, reciprocal teaching, and cooperative group work.

*In cooperative learning, students are provided w/ opportunities to not only interact w/ the teacher, but to interact and teach each other.

*Cooperative learning capitalizes on complex classroom dynamics.

*Ladson-Billings (1994) argues that collaborative structures and team building are important elements used by ...effective teachers of AA students.”

*Skilled teachers use cooperative groups to offset ability grouping and establish high expectations.

*Graduate students at the University of Ark. used cooperative group learning for law classes and statistics.

*The tracking debate continues to be topic of conversation--even in 2003.

*Most multicultural education advocates are strongly opposed to tracking.

*Classes for gifted and low-track students are perceived as contributing to unequal access to the curriculum.

*Oakes has done extensive research on tracking. Discuss findings. Students are placed in ability groups based on poor measures and inadequate placement decisions.”

*Cooperative/collaborative strategies have been found helpful with language minority students.

*Group work not only stimulate the development of language skills, but also increases learning across all subject matter,” Campbell.

*Cooperative learning does not replace the competitive approach for traditional learners, but it does facilitate learning for selected minority students.

*Teacher serves as monitor, helper, & coach in cooperative learning.

*Campbell feels there is no evidence that this approach hinders traditional learners.

*Teachers in the middle grades (6-8) benefit from this approach because less time can be spent on controlling students and more time working w/ individual students.

*Following steps are recommended for preparing a class for cooperative learning:

-design the environment--students need to be taught to work together.

Very young students & students new to cooperation should begin extended practice working in pairs. Select tasks students can complete in 5/10 minutes.

Pairs can be combined to establish teams of 4 to 6. Just a few examples.

-Select appropriate tasks--intrinsic & immediate rewards are very important for successful completion of assigned tasks.

Group work lends itself to problem solving as opposed to rote memorization, e.g., of little importance in memorizing historical or geographical facts.

-Teach appropriate roles. See appropriate roles in Figures 10.1 & 10.2.

-Encourage positive interdependence--mutually dependent--dependent on each another.

Traditional grading systems emphasizes competition.

Interdependence stresses group teamwork.

*Cooperative learning is used to confront racism and sexism through equal-status interaction.

*Sleeter & Grant discuss how teachers can confront racism & sexism, especially racism.

*Children learn prejudice from their parents & peers.

*Teaching students positive human relations helps to reduce prejudice," Campbell.

*Cooperative learning is an effective technique for classroom management.

Collaborative learning is based on several related principles, according to Sonia Nieto:

-that creating a more equal status among students of different levels of achievement can result in higher achievement for all;

-that working on common problems enhances interethnic understanding and solidarity.

*Jerome Bruner (1996) has suggested, when students work together in community, they scaffold one another's learning.

*Particularly, effective teachers of learners of diverse backgrounds typically have developed learning communities that are collaborative rather than individualistic (Olsen & Mullen, 1990).

*For such teachers, learning occurs most effectively in community.

*research also highlights the benefits of small teams in promoting learning.

*An example is Philip Uri Triesman's (1992) work at UC-Berkley w/ the poor achievement of African-American students in calculus courses.

*Triesman surveyed the faculty to help him figure out what was wrong.

*Without exception, the faculty sought explanations in the students themselves--ranging from poor motivation to lack of parental support, to poor preparation.

*The faculty members were exonerated from any responsibility.

*Triesman found that students' family income actually was negatively correlated w/ their grades in calculus.

*Triesman discovered, after closer investigation, that many African-American students had few peers they could relate to at the college level; they studied along.

*Triesman redesigned the remedial calculus course as an "honors workshop" open to all students.

*For students not doing well, it was a required collaboration that would help because their previous math scores indicated they were ready for calculus.

*The workshop provided students w/ rigorous work, often surpassing the level of the courses in which they were enrolled.

*Not only were all students treated as talented individuals, but they were all expected to work as a group to enhance their collective achievement.

*A key point is that the academic content of the course was not watered down; rather, it was enriched.

*The pedagogy, however, was improved.

*The results of this workshop were that African-American students who took part in it eventually outperformed their White peers.

*In addition, only 4% of those who participated ended up getting a D or an F in the course, compared with 60% previously.

*Similarly, engaging in dialogue is an important way for students to become actively engaged in school.

*Learning based on dialogue is most often associated w/ Paulo Freire.

*Freire has defined dialogic education as a process which “the object to be known is put on the table between the two subjects of knowing. They meet around it and through it for mutual inquiry” (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 99).

* “...Dialogue is the sealing together of the teacher and students in the joint act of knowing and re-knowing the object of study. (p. 100).

Student Learning is Promoted When There is a Strong Connection to Teachers, Schools, and Learning

*A survey of African American young men in four cities revealed a close relationship w/ teachers is an essential ingredient in helping students stay in school.

*The young men who stayed in school reported that their teachers gave them hope for the future.

*Those who dropped out of school said they had much weaker personal relationship w/ their teachers (Harris & Associates, 1994).

*Another study by Hollins and Spencer (1990) found similar results:

-High school-age African American students identified as their favorite teachers those who had positive interactions w/ them and who acknowledged aspects of their lives outside of the classroom.

*Other research shows that there is a great need for teachers to forge deep and meaningful relationships w/ students.

*A number of conditions make developing these relationships difficult. What are they?

*In order to develop meaningful relationships w/ their students, teachers first need to transform their own attitudes and beliefs about the value and worthiness of non-majority-group students.

*There is a need for institutional agents, that is, individuals who help young people negotiate institutional resources and opportunities, including information about academic programs, career decision making and college admissions, role modeling, and emotional and moral support.

*Bicultural students need to develop social capital needed for academic success; it is only through these institutional agents that they are able to do so.

Cooperative Learning—“Cooperative learning that includes equal-status interaction strategies works against prejudice by providing students w/ regular experiences of mutual support, dependence, and caring” (Campbell)

*It is “important to place students who might be low status in high-status positions for group projects and assist them in performing there” (Campbell).

*Try to design cooperative groups in ways that ensure the distribution of high status to all” (Campbell)

*Campbell state that children learn prejudice.

*However, prejudice can be reduced through cooperative learning.

*A substantial body of research shows that cooperative learning reduces prejudiced behavior in the classroom when teachers use planned interventions to control for social status” (Campbell).

*Campbell states that students who are very prejudiced may resist working cooperatively in groups.

*The teacher should exercise leadership and insist on positive, democratic behavior in his/his classroom and in the school” (Campbell).

*“...Do not permit prejudices brought from outside to structure your classroom interaction” (Campbell).

*Campbell suggests rotating students through roles to assist them in practicing and developing the skills of leading and assisting others.

*Campbell suggests using cooperative learning for bilingual children-- students with limited English skills.

*Teachers should “design role relationships that place bilingual children in roles as experts”

*Using “bilingual children as translators in cooperative groups creates a win-win situation for students” (Campbell).

“Teaching cooperative learning in an increasingly self-centered, individualistic, and competitive society is difficult (Campbell).

*Many students are not prepared to cooperate.

*Thus, the teacher must teach the skills of cooperation and the attitudes supporting cooperation” (Campbell).

*Campbell further suggests that “when a number of students fail at cooperation, carefully reteach the skills and roles of cooperative learning” (p. 265).

*Finally, “you, the teacher, should address major problems of management, alienation, or nonparticipation by a few students, not assign them to the group” (Campbell).