MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION

A CURRICULUM FOR EVERY STUDENT

BY JANET MALLERY

How can I add multicultural education to my schedule? I only have so much time in the day, and you are asking me to add another subject! What do you want me to leave out—health, music, math?" Tom, a competent seventh-grade teacher, expresses the attitude of many conscientious educators. Fortunately, he and others like him have been willing to adapt their teaching. They have followed the steps necessary—not to artificially tack on—but to naturally **infuse** multicultural education into the curriculum without adding any classes to the daily schedule. James Banks, noted author and primary theorist for multicultural education, says "We teach the same areas; we may reconceptualize them, but it's not something added on."[1]

Designing a multicultural curriculum reaches beyond knowledge and skills to attitudes and perspectives. The words, music, art, bulletin boards, games, and other curriculum elements the teacher chooses will be shaped by his or her attitudes about students. The conviction that all are created in God's image leads to acceptance of each child as a member of the family of God. Maya Angelou's succinct statement, "We are more alike than unalike"[2] should be the philosophy portrayed to students. Basic commonalities are the foundation for a multicultural curriculum.

However, limiting oneself to basic commonalities will produce

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a lopsided curriculum. Each subject needs to include distinct perspectives and contributions of people from many backgrounds. Each student has a right to ask, "Who is telling *my* story?" during history, math, science, music, and other areas of the curriculum. Sonio Nieto provides the bottom line here: "Multicultural education . . . is about all people."[3] Carl Mack, Jr. believes that if multicultural education is to be successful, it will have to improve students' educational performance.[4] J. Cummins holds that students who "are not alienated from their own culture of values" and feel positive about their own and the majority culture are less likely to experience school failure.[5]

The following suggestions focus on some basic elements that teachers can integrate into the existing curriculum. They are not an add-on or additional courses. The goal is to integrate multicultural education in a natural way into the entire school curriculum.

Ideas for Integrating Multiculturalism

Broaden your own scope. Learn something each day about the people around you. Set a personal goal of becoming multiculturally educated: Take time to visit a variety of ethnic churches, read newspapers and magazines published by various groups, try foods from around the world, read books by and about a variety of cultures, travel to different places, and listen to music from many countries. Your new perspectives will become obvious to your students through the comments and illustrations you use in various subjects.

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Highlight linguistic similarities. For example, when studying about families in the primary grades or geography at the secondary level, point out similarities of words such as *mother* in various languages. In Russian, mother is *mati*; in Spanish, the word is *madre*; in Chinese, *mama*; and in Persian, *mader*.

Identify origins of words. Information about the origins of words can be introduced in a natural way. Examples of English words that originated in different cultures are *tea* (China), *khaki* (India), *cocoa* (Spain), *pretzel* (Germany), and *ukulele* (Hawaii).[6]

Use primary sources. Reading a child's diary about traveling west in a covered wagon offers a more accurate and interesting portrayal of feelings, perspectives, and experiences than reading the facts from a typical textbook. The National Archives and the Internet are great resources for primary documents. (See list of Selected Internet Addresses.)

Enhance your environment. Messages are conveyed to students through room arrangements, music, art, bulletin boards, stories, and games. Listed below are some ideas to help you prepare young people to live successfully in an increasingly multicultural society:

• *On bulletin boards, display pictures of people from different cultures involved in various occupations, games, celebrations, etc.* Avoid older materials, which are likely to portray stereotypes. Buy greeting cards and wrapping paper with mul-

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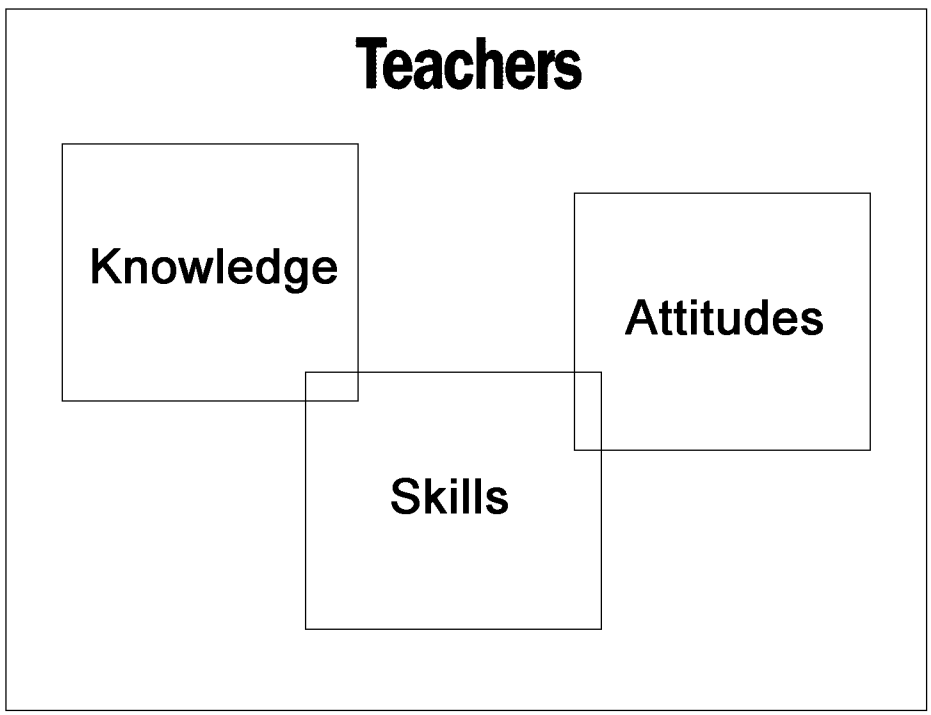


WHAT DO I TELL PARENTS? WHERE DO I GET MATERIALS?

Change in classroom knowledge, skills, and attitudes will not happen overnight. And change often creates anxiety. Parents need to understand the multicultural education philosophy and approach used in the classroom. Consider making a presentation at an open house, or send a letter home. Share with parents your commitment to educating their children to live in a world of rapid change and diversity. As you talk with parents, let them know that your approach has three components: (1) basic commonalities; (2) respect and appreciation for constructive differences; and (3) discovery of family history, values, and culture.

How can you get information and materials? Read widely and consult with other teachers. It may take some time to gather items from many sources. A great deal of information and material will come from regular browsing and studying as you prepare for your lessons in art, reading, math, history, or science. As your awareness level rises, you will notice multicultural themes. Begin small. As you progress, you will see evidence of your efforts in the lives of your students as they come to respect and appreciate others.

ticultural themes (available at stationery stores) or order current multicultural materials from teacher supply stores and catalogs.

- *Arrange students' desks or work areas to encourage interaction.*
- *Include books and magazines about people from a variety of cultures in the classroom library.* (See list of Recommended Books for Young People.)
- *Feature music from many cultures and countries* on classroom tapes and CDs.
- *Order paint, markers, and paper that represent a variety of skin tones and colors.*
- *Label classroom items in students' primary languages.*
- *Exhibit artifacts from various cultures* in the classroom.
- *Include traditional and contemporary clothing* from different cultures for younger students' dress-up play.
- When planning physical education, *incorporate sports and games from around the world.*
- *Feature a multicultural calendar* with dates for ethnic holidays and special days. (Contact teacher supply stores or catalogs for this item.)

Utilize community resource people. Invite parents, church members, and other community members to share their stories, foods, music, games, and heritage.

Read works from many different authors, cultures, and perspectives. Revise older selections as needed.

Provide for multiple intelligences. Students are smart in numerous ways. Capitalize on this by teaching to all their intelligences. See the October/November 1996 issue of THE JOURNAL OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION for ideas.

The multicultural curriculum stresses seeing things though others' perspectives. Black History Month, Cinco de Mayo, Chinese New Year, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Day are examples of times set apart for recognition. While this is a good start, just celebrating holidays does not infuse multicultural education into the classroom. In most cases, the class goes back to business as usual after the celebration. Rather, teachers need to develop a natural, ongoing way of viewing things from other perspectives. According to Banks, this means planning to intentionally incorporate all students' dreams, struggles, and hopes.[7]

How, then, does one truly infuse multicultural education into the curriculum? The teacher must constantly seek to help students see situations, history, or literature from the point of view of all people who are involved with the topic. As students get to the junior high and academy level, they need to understand that people have differing points of view and can experience the same event in profoundly divergent ways. Examining these different perspectives is critical to gaining insight into what actually happened.

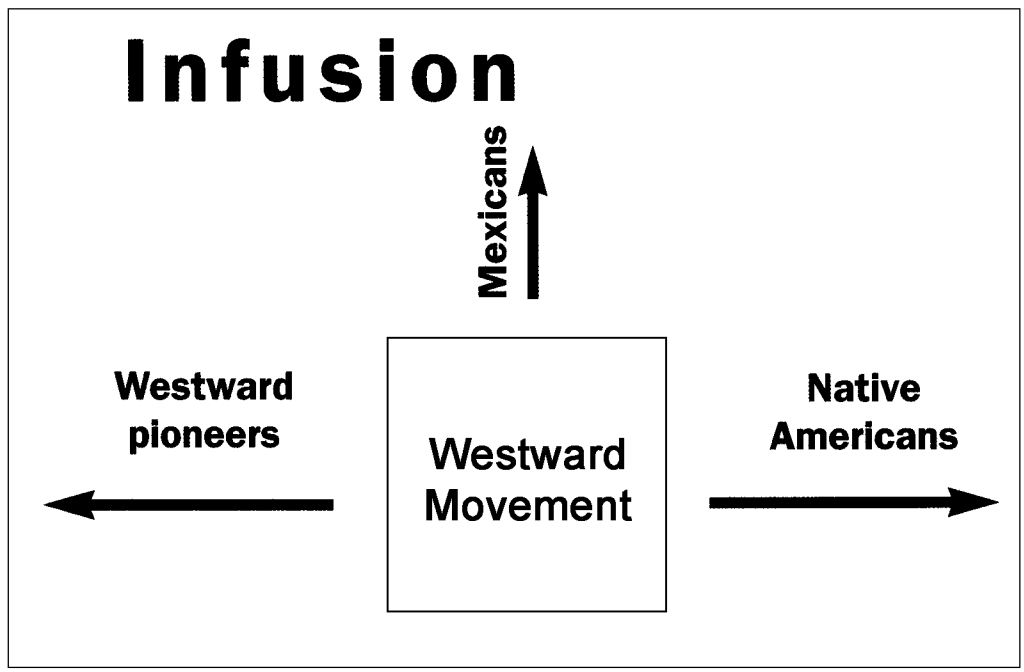
For example, the story of the 1876 Battle of the Little Bighorn between the U.S. cavalry and Sioux and Cheyenne Indian warriors can be told from two perspectives: that of Chief Crazy Horse or that of General Custer. In 1988, the Native Americans erected a monument at the site to tell their story. Their perspective is different from the traditional one told by white Americans. Though discussing the same event, they have distinct points of view.

We will probably never truly understand another's point of view. We can, however, help our students learn to appreciate different opinions and respect those who hold them. This can help us see things through different "glasses."

Elementary and secondary social studies are probably the easiest place to introduce new ways of looking at things. Take, for example, a study of the "westward" movement in the United States. We usually talk about the pioneers who went west, but how often do we talk about the feelings and situations of the Mexicans and Native Americans who were already there? A helpful way to explain this is to draw a circle, putting the topic for consideration inside. Draw rays coming out of the circle, printing on them the names of some of the many people with different viewpoints on the topic. Ask, "Who else would be involved with this topic? What were their feelings and perspectives, their hopes and dreams? How are we all more alike than different?"[8]

What does multicultural instruction mean for the teacher? He or she must develop new ways of thinking—a multicultural attitude, if you will—and always try to see things through others' eyes.

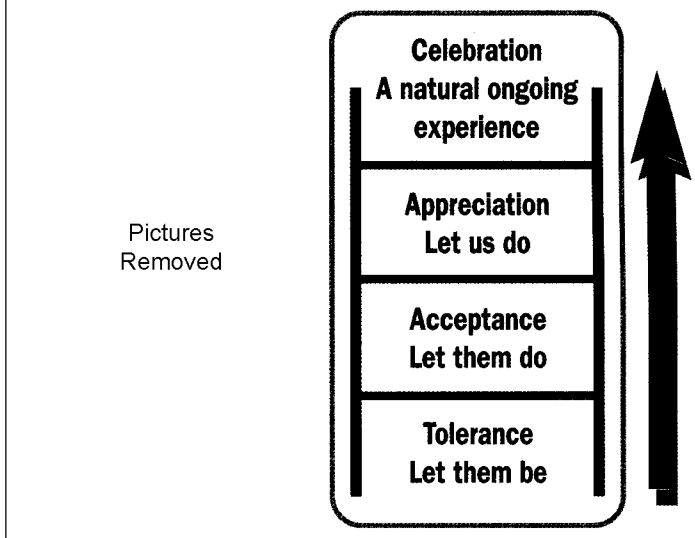
San Francisco teacher Judy Levy-Sender quickly discovered her need for sensitivity to others' perspectives when she taught a spelling lesson to mostly Cambodian youngsters. She explains, "I was using a hangman game. One youngster said to me, 'You know, that is how my parents died.'"[9] What a startling revelation that students are not the same as they



used to be. These changes require us to re-examine our attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

Modeling Sensitivity

The teacher must personally model sensitivity about others' perspectives. In formal and informal ways, students will come to see things through others' points of view. You know you have a truly multicultural curriculum when students naturally ask questions such as, "Well, what about the people who lived there? How did they feel? What did they do?" When the students see the teacher model this behavior, they will begin to see things through other people's eyes.



Hierarchy of Reactions to Multiculturalism

Other ways to infuse multiculturalism naturally into various subjects in the existing curriculum could include the following:

• *History*. Every student is a part of the history of his or her state and country. All families have moved or immigrated. Use these experiences to make history come alive. Ask parents to help provide information that students can use to make a time line of their family history. Discuss the diversity of the family backgrounds within your classroom. Comment on similarities and commonalities that all families have when coming to the state or country.

• *Math*. Many people contributed to the development of arithmetic: Africans were the first to use numerals, the Chinese invented negative numbers, Native Americans were first to use a symbol for zero, and Egyptians invented unit fractions. The word *algebra* is Arabic in origin. The first geometric concepts were developed in Africa and Asia and used in building of the Egyptian pyramids. People all over the world have contributed to the development of geometry: Eskimos built igloos in the shape of a catenary, and Mozambicans built rectangular houses by using equal-length ropes as the diagonals. The Mayans analyzed data so they could create astronomical tables to predict eclipses. This type of information can be inserted at the appropriate time and in a natural manner within the curriculum. Most newer editions of math textbooks offer a variety of multicultural information and activities in each topical strand.

• *Literature*. Students can be asked to analyze each work in terms of basic commonalities of experiences. Rose Reissman suggests discussing constructive cultural characteristics and cultural events found in the writing.[10] In addition to the numerous trade books that reflect multicultural perspectives, the Life Reading Series (used in Seventh-day Adventist schools across North America) is one of the best examples of multicultural infusion into reading class. A look at the table of contents for the series reveals stories from all parts of the world.

• *Science*. Be on the lookout in books, magazines, TV programs, and newspapers for the names of inventors and scientists who came from various cultures. Tuck this information away in the appropriate file or textbook. At the opportune time, bring it into the lessons. For instance, although the term "the real McCoy" is a familiar one, most people do not know that this comes from the contribution of Elijah McCoy, an African-American who invented a lubricating cup that fed oil to machinery in the late 1800s. When studying the heart, you can mention that Daniel Hale Williams, an African-American doctor, did the first successful heart operation in 1898.

These are ways to help students gain respect for each other and to answer each one's question, "Who is telling *my* story?"

Christians must climb the rungs of Hierarchy of Reactions to Multiculturism at least to the Tolerance level.[11] Yet, tolerance is not a warm fuzzy that will create an environment of pride, respect, self-esteem, and true success for students. The highest level, Celebration, reflects the example of Christ.

Some of our students will be future church leaders. They—and all members—need to see things from other people's perspectives in a way that transcends acceptance and appreciation to true celebration of our God-given similarities and differences. Our church, which reflects the diversity of the world, can be united in Christ only as we appreciate and celebrate one another.

RECOMMENDED TEACHER RESOURCES

Albyn, Carole L., and Lois S. Webb. *The Multicultural Cookbook for Students*. Phoenix, Ariz.: Oryx Press, 1993.

Atwater, Mary M., Kelly Radzik-Marsh, and Marilyn Strutchens (eds.). *Multicultural Education: Inclusion of All*. Athens, Ga.: University of Georgia, 1994.

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Davidman, L., and P. T. Davidman. *Teaching With a Multicultural Perspective: A Practical Guide*. New York: Longman, 1994.

Diaz, Carlos (ed.). *Multicultural Education for the 21st Century*. Washing-

ton, D.C.: National Education Association, 1992.
Dresser, Norine. *Multicultural Manners: New Rules of Etiquette for a Changing Society*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996.
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Huber-Bowen, Tonya. *Teaching in the Diverse Classroom: Learner-Centered Activities That Work*. Bloomington, In.: National Educational Service, 1993.
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Ladson-Billings, Gloria. *The Dream Keepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1994.
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Moore, Jo E. *Families Around the World*. Monterey, Calif.: Evan-Moor Corp., 1991. National Archives and Research Administration. *Teaching With Documents*. Washington, D.C.: 1992.
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Polon, Linda, and Aileen Cantwell. The *Whole Earth Holiday Book*. Glenview, Il.: Scott Foresman, 1983.
Reissman, Rose. *The Evolving Multicultural Classroom*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1994.
Rumble, Beverly. J. (ed.). "Getting Plugged Into Multiple Intelligences." *The Journal of Adventist Education* 59:1 (October/November 1996), whole issue.
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Trentacosta, Janet, and Margaret J. Kenney (eds.). *Muticultural and Gender Equality in the Mathematics Classroom: The Gift of Diversity*. Reston, Va.: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1997 (yearbook).
Tye, Kenneth A. (ed.). *Global Education: From Thought to Action*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1990.
Warren, Joseph W., and Cynthia Taylor Warren. "Multicultural Education: A Spiritual Imperative." *The Journal of Adventist Education* 56:1 (October/ November 1993), pp. 24-26.
Wyman, Sarah L. *How to Respond to Your Culturally Diverse Student Population*. Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1993.

RECOMMENDED BOOKS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Begaye, Lisa S. *Building a Bridge*. Flagstaff, Ariz.: Northland Publishing, 1993.
Bunting, Eve. *How Many Days to America? A Thanksgiving Story*. Burlington, Mass.: Clarion Books, 1988.
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Haskins, Jim. *Count Your Way Through India*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Carolrhoda Books, 1990.
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Knight, Margy B. *Talking Walls*. St. Paul, Minn.: Tilburn House, 1992.
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SELECTED INTERNET ADDRESSES

www.umdl.umich.edu/moa/ "Making of America" project is a data base containing the full text of books and publications from the 19th century.

www.classroom.net/ Information on a variety of educational topics, search tools, lesson plans, and subject searches.

http://www.ald.bham.wednet.edu/museum/museum.htm Immigration and Ellis Island project.

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6. For more examples, see "Borrowed Words Game" in *Immigration, Thematic Unit #234* by Teacher Created Materials, Inc., 1993.
7. Banks, p. 21.
8. Concept taken from Jawanza Kunjufo, "Lessons From History: A Celebration in Blackness" video.
9. Judy Levy-Sender, Personal Communication, May 22, 1997.
10. Rose Reissman, *The Evolving Multicultural Classroom* (Alexandria, Va.: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1994), p. 2.
11. Concept taken from Bernardo Garcia, "The Multicultural Classroom: What Does It Look Like?" Presentation at the Annual Conference for the National Association for Elementary School Principals, Orlando, Florida, March 1994.