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Multicultural Education

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Self Evaluation and Reflection

 I’ve always fancied myself as more multicultural than your average Joe. Because my family is racially diverse and I was on often on my cultural high horse, thinking I knew everything I needed to know. Though I was good at recognizing and identifying culture, before this class I wasn’t especially skilled at determining the implications of multiculturalism on a classroom and interpersonal relations. I expected this class to focus on what culture is and I was happily surprised when we instead focused on what culture *means*.

 I believe the composition of the class allowed for the in depth discussions of implications of culture that we had. My favorite part about this class was the group discussion. I respected my classmates’ opinions and felt like they respected mine, even when we disagreed. One of the subjects that the group helped me the most was LGBTQ affairs. The insights of my classmates as well as the guided discussions imparted important knowledge about how different parts of American society interact with LGBTQ issues. I’m especially grateful for this knowledge as I will be a customs AMA next year and did not feel like I had a solid knowledge base in this subject.

 I consistently tried to bring outside ideas into class for my own benefit and for the benefit of my classmates. I was always looking for connections between other classes, poetry, philosophy, books, and music because in a class about multiculturalism it seemed appropriate to include different cultural mediums.

 I believe that this class made me more adept at recognizing my own bias in classrooms as both a student and an educator. I ask myself more often than not what might lead someone to come to a different conclusion than me.

 I don’t feel as if the class was especially relevant to my work at PALM because our roles at the center were never clearly defined. I was however able to use concepts from this class during my volunteer hours at Thorne Kindergarten. The idea of ‘students as curriculum’ was helpful when I was trying to figure out how to interact with various small groups.

 I always made sure to read at least a couple of my classmates’ online posts before I wrote mine. I wanted to write my own ideas, but I also wanted to stay in the same vein as some of my classmates to keep discussions rolling smoothly. My favorite activity with the posts was the large group silent response in which different posts were taped around the room. The only thing I wished was a bigger part of the activity was written response to each other’s ideas.

The most important thing I learned was how integral *self-described* culture is to drafting an individualized plan for a student. Listening and learning self-described culture can show a teacher where the student might need a cultural ‘boost’. For instance, a student raised with natural growth is less likely to have active parent involvement than a student raised with concerted cultivation, however this does not mean that the natural growth parents aren’t interested and involved in their child’s education, they just might not feel as comfortable with the school as an institution. Recognizing this can allow a teacher to be proactive in seeking parent involvement and input.