

A Dream Brought to Life: My Philosophy of Multicultural Education

One of the most culturally influential men of all time, Martin Luther King Jr., said in his famous speech, “I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.” Like Dr. King, I also dream of a place where children and adults alike will be accepted for who they are in their hearts and not what they look like, where they come from, who they choose to love, or any other difference that sets people apart. As a future teacher I am lucky enough to be a part of the movement to help this dream become reality. I intend to do this by realizing that my students are diverse and celebrating their differences, developing positive relationships with staff and students as well as being a positive role model, implementing multicultural education into my classroom, and by being a culturally responsive teacher and continuing my education to broaden my own personal horizons.

Diverse Students

All students, regardless of cultural background have the capability to learn. Having a diverse classroom in many aspects is immensely enriching for both teacher and students because it promotes open-mindedness and working together as a team to understand differences. As a future teacher it is my duty to embrace the fact that all students, and people for that matter, are unique individuals and should be treated with fairness and I intend to make this a point in my classroom. I will do this by having a zero tolerance policy for any type of bullying or discrimination, and if unfortunately it does arise, it will be handled immediately. Student meetings are a great way to address issues like bullying and intolerance when they become a problem and can be used as teachable moments. It is important to me to celebrate the cultural backgrounds and traditions of my students and believe that the school environment in which I teach should display multiculturalism and share these desires to embrace diversity. A wonderful way to make sure I accomplish these goals is by forming positive relationships with my students and faculty.

Positive Relationships

It is my understanding that my future students will look up to me and therefore it is my job to implement social justice so my students will be interested to do the same. I will be an advocate for my students and their differences and always be on their side to help them succeed. Everyone needs to feel safe and welcome in order to open their minds to learn, so I intend to make my classroom a safe space for all of my students and I will ensure that they feel comfortable expressing their thoughts and feelings without fear of judgment or discrimination of any kind. I do not believe in making excuses for my students based on what I know about their home lives or any other reason and I will hold them all to the same high standards to they reach for success. Trust is key and I will develop trust with my students by being unbiased, listening to them when they talk and treating them like mature young people, and by admitting when I have made a mistake. Alongside positive relationships, implementing a multicultural education is a large piece in making the dream of children to be free of discrimination come alive.

Multicultural Curriculum

Celebrating and supporting my students and their differences through the subjects taught in my classroom is a very useful tool and something that means a great deal to me as a future educator. It is a

goal of mine to teach my students to value diversity instead of fear it regardless of the cultural make-up of my classroom. I also will stay away from only implementing culture in lesson plans during certain “special” times, such as only learning about African American individuals who made an impact in our history during Black History Month. My future students will learn about people of different races, cultural backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and academic ability who made contributions to the world they live in. This helps them to make connections to real life and realize that they too, can accomplish anything they set their minds to. I will work diligently to view every student equally to avoid unintentionally displaying any act of favoritism. A great way to make my entire class feel equal and celebrated in a subtle way is to have multicultural literature and resources in my classroom. In addition to making sure my teaching is multicultural, I intend to be a culturally responsive teacher.

Dispositions of a Culturally Responsive Teacher

In order to keep Dr. King’s dream a reality I plan to always continue to educate myself on different cultures so that I can be as well rounded as possible. I also will be active in serving my community and encourage my students to do the same. In my classroom displaying student work as well as photographs of the children with their families will aid in making everyone feel as important and equally valued in my classroom as they will be. Positive and negative feedback is essential to the growth of me as a person and as a culturally responsive educator, so I intend to accept criticism and use it to better myself, my lessons, or the way I handle situations that arise in the classroom. I also believe in using a variety of teaching styles so that all of my students have equal opportunity to learn the material to the best of their ability.

40 years ago Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. stood up for his dream that maybe one day children would be accepted for who they were on the inside and not diminished due to their differences. It is a passion of mine to keep his dream alive and help to make it a reality. My upmost passion in life is children and providing them with the tools to be a productive member of society and to feel like they belong in this world. I know that I might not be able to change the world, but I can change the opinions of young people and mold my students into accepting, loving adults by displaying those behaviors in my classroom through the material I teach, the relationships I build, educating myself, and celebrating diversity every day of the year. I am fortunate to be in a place where I can make a difference and “I have a dream” to do just that in the lives of my future students.