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Culturally Responsive Strategies for Effective Teaching

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Strand #2

Social & Emotional Skills

Relevance

Today's schools require teachers to educate students who vary widely in culture, race, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity. For decades, public schools across the United States have seen decreases in test scores and student achievement, and an increase in the number of dropouts of students in these diverse subgroups. Yet, even though research continues to show that education is a crucial factor in improving an individual's life chances, all students do not receive high-quality educational opportunities. Because the student population is steadily increasing and becoming more diverse, teachers need to understand cultural diversity and multicultural education, so they are better prepared to teach in 21st century classrooms. Culturally responsive teaching practices and cultural diversity discussions provide a wealth of knowledge and tools teachers need to strengthen skills in culturally responsive teaching practices, enhance cultural awareness, and improve cultural competency development for effective teaching.

Brief Program Description

Examining teachers' beliefs about diversity within the context of race, ethnicity and culture, social class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, language, religion, and geography are important because these beliefs affect teachers' decisions regarding minority group students. Hence, it is imperative that teachers understand the role cultural diversity, implicit bias, ESSA, equality, equity, cultural disconnect, and culturally responsive teaching strategies in the classroom. Teachers need training that utilizes research-based strategies and tools, so they develop knowledge, and understanding of culturally responsive strategies designed to raise the bar and close the gap for underserved student groups as identified in the ESSA.

Summary

As more and more students from diverse backgrounds populate 21st century classrooms, and as efforts rise to discover effective teaching methods for these students, the need for more culturally responsive pedagogical practices magnifies. Because student needs are diverse, teachers often face the dilemma of how to teach to meet the needs of all children. Planning lessons, deciding applicable instructional strategies, and then delivering the lesson so that all students learn involve more factors than just teacher knowledge of content and strategies. Teachers need to create a classroom culture where all students, regardless of their cultural, economic, and linguistic background, are nurtured, supported, and provided the best education possible. As such, the lack of experience suggests that teachers need more cultural diversity training. Teachers who are properly trained about cultural differences and preconceived beliefs about diversity will be better prepared to teach diverse student groups. Thus, it is imperative that teachers gain an understanding of their beliefs about diversity and knowledge of culturally responsive strategies to promote equity and improve academic achievement for all children especially for high-poverty populations.

Evidence

The teacher is the most important element in the classroom. Students suffer when teachers are not effective. As student populations continue to grow and diversify, teacher effectiveness is more crucial now than ever before. According to Geneva Gay (2002), a highly referenced researcher on the topic of culturally responsive pedagogy, using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students, teachers build learning communities, promote more effective communication, and present appropriate instructional delivery to students. The National Education Association (2011) (NEA) promoted the use of culturally responsive instruction, social justice, equity, and mutual respect in the classroom. According to the NEA (2011), teachers should use culturally relevant, non-stereotypical textbooks and culturally supportive resources and activities that celebrate students' similarities, differences, strengths, and weaknesses. In addition, the NEA suggested that teachers focused on students' academic strength and ability, build positive relationships with students, their families, and the community. Amy Brace (2011) examined teachers' level of cultural competence with urban students. The researcher found that teachers believed that better relationships with students would increase academic achievement. The results from this study revealed that students were more willing to work and engage in the educational process. The researcher concluded that teachers needed to have positive attitudes toward diversity and cultural differences for students to achieve at high levels in the classroom.

Format

Individual Presentation

Biographical Sketch

Dr. Regina Watts Lewis is principal of Harrison County Alternative School. She has over 25 years of experience working in public education. She holds M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Educational Leadership. She has also received numerous awards for leadership, support, and commitment to students in the field of education.

Elizabeth Kay Arnold is a teacher at the Harrison County Alternative School with over 20 years of teaching experience. She holds a B.S. and M.Ed. in Education and is currently completing her PhD in Educational Leadership. She has received numerous awards for leadership and excellence in education.

Keyword Descriptors

Culturally responsive teaching, teacher beliefs, cultural diversity, effective teaching, equity and equality, cultural competency development, cultural disconnect, multicultural education

Presentation Year

2020