

Teaching Diverse Learners

Dorothy S. Strickland

The Big Ideas:

- The nation's classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse.
- Aspects of diversity include culture; language, ability, interests, background knowledge, and approach to learning.
- Diversity exists both within and across racial and ethnic groups.
- Schools should acknowledge and respond to the diversity that exists among students.
- Schools should provide learning environments in which teachers and students become acquainted with and respect the diversity of others.
- Students enter school with viable language systems and cultural backgrounds
- Competence is not tied to a particular cultural or linguistic background
- Students' language, culture, and experiential backgrounds are worthy sources for literacy activities; they provide a base for expanding language and literacy.
- Student competence in standard English is a worthy and appropriate goal of the school; expansion to standard English should be offered as an opportunity for choice in language usage not as a rejection of home language.
- The culturally responsive knowledge and practice of educators can play a significant role in how well students learn

Aspects of Diversity**Examples: Evidence of Attention to Diversity**

Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teacher knowledge (visits to be acquainted with) local community.• Parent/teacher conference (teacher asking parent to share impressions of how child learns; child's favorite pastimes; etc)• Multicultural literature - on display; in use• Support system/programs for parents
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communication to parents in more than one language• Vocabulary study - attempts to link to native language• Writing conference where teacher gently coaches child to move from non-standard to standard English
Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Small group instruction - guided reading; literature circle using multicultural literature; targeted skills instruction (short-term, intense);• Products of multi-level instruction (one prompt - varied response)
Interests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work samples - writing on topics of choice; response to reading of choice.• Work samples that reflect choice of subtopics within larger themes (negotiated choice)• Collections of books on varied levels; topics
Background Knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thematic instruction - strategies to build background knowledge and vocabulary about topics;• Strategies for introducing new words/concepts before reading - particularly in content areas• Hands on strategies for developing concepts/vocabulary - evidence of links to particular culture/language.
Approaches To Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Varied modalities for learning: books, computers, choices for• Varied ways to demonstrate knowledge/learning: written reports; oral reports; drama; three dimensional displays; graphic displays; power point; combinations of these

Prepared by Dorothy S. Strickland