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Critical Inquiry Exploration 1
Diversity Education

Research-based developing of the topic context

Sources

Making space: teaching for diversity and social justice throughout the K-12 curriculum. (2008). Retrieved from https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/irp/pdfs/making_space/makingSpace_full.pdf.

The *Making Space* resource is a guide created for classroom teachers in mind. The guide provides teachers with “instructional and assessment activities” so that teachers can effectively teach about social diversity and social justice. Through the suggestions within the guide, teachers can support students “understanding and respect for all persons.” While this resource includes some ideas on ways to create a diverse classroom and welcome diversity, the activities offered span all the areas of the BC Curriculum, including Social Studies, and uses the different curricular lenses to “promote the understanding and appreciation of diversity.” The guide encourages teachers to teach students about more than the diversity found within the classroom but to teach about people and issues that “may not be visible or evident in the local community.” A highlight of this resource is the importance put on teaching about differences that are not see everything, as our students belong to a “provincial, national, and global community.”

Wells, A. S., Fox, L. & Cordova-Cobo, D. (2016). How radically diverse schools and classrooms can benefit all students. Retrieved from: <https://tcf.org/content/report/how-racially-diverse-schools-and-classrooms-can-benefit-all-students/>

While written in the American context, this article acknowledges the desire that people in society (everyone from parents to employers) have for our schools to prepare students for the diverse society and global economy that we are currently living in. The article acknowledges that students are interacting with a more significant diverse classroom with fellow-students from different orientations, backgrounds, and cultures than students did even twenty years ago. Connections are made between the importance of teaching education of diversity in elementary school and the success those students have as they enter into higher education where the diversity of the campus often increases substantially. Having an appreciation for diversity also helps to create students who are better prepared for the workforce and more desired employees. The article shares the importance of diverse classroom and also creating a diverse learning atmosphere, through all the

different lenses, by bringing in literature, resources, images, and lessons that expand beyond the local experience.

Kampen, M. (2019). 7 ways to support diversity in the classroom. Retrieved from: <https://www.prodigygame.com/blog/diversity-in-the-classroom/>

This webpage provides a quick resource for supporting and growing diversity in the school while also providing further links to other articles so educators can expand their knowledge about diversity in the classroom. For this project, this website is a helpful tool in giving some definitions, facts, and basic research on diversity in the school, which I believe to be useful for teachers before they begin to plan lessons connected to “promoting understanding and appreciation for education.”

Scope, Significance, Application

The topic of diversity education is central to the Social Studies curriculum as so much of Social Studies is learning about people in our local, national, and global community. Even in geography, we can include a conversation about who the people are who live in a particular place. Beyond Social Studies, this topic is significant in educating young people as a whole. Opening young people up to the diversity of our world will equip today's students to grow up and enter into society as adults who are prepared and willing to embrace the diverse world we are living in. The application of this topic is crucial for today's learning and today's world. It holds a scope of application that goes far beyond our classrooms and schools but enters into relationships, grocery stores, community gatherings, the workplace, our churches, and in our travels. In 2020 we cannot afford to miss this critical teaching and to teach it through all our curricular areas. We need to look beyond present-day diversity and include examining and learning from how diversity has and has not been embraced in our history; to unpack and look at the injustice that has taken place in many communities, places, and to many groups of people. Diversity education will form and shape today's students as they enter into our world.

BC Education Plan

The topic of Diversity Education has many connections to the BC Social Studies Curriculum for grades Kindergarten through grade seven. The below list highlights the Big Ideas and Content areas of some of these connections.

Kindergarten

Big Ideas:

- Our communities are diverse and made of individuals who have a lot in common.
- Rights, roles, and responsibilities shape our identity and help us build healthy relationships with others.

Content:

- ways in which individuals and families differ and are the same.

- rights, roles, and responsibilities of individuals and groups.
- people, places, and events in the local community, and in local First Peoples communities.

Grade 1

Big Ideas:

- Healthy communities recognize and respect the diversity of individuals and care for the local environment.

Content:

- Characteristics of the local community that provide organization and meet the needs of the community.
- Diverse cultures, backgrounds, and perspectives within the local and other communities.

Grade 2

Big Ideas

- Canada is made up of many diverse regions and communities.

Content

- Diverse characteristics of communities and cultures in Canada and around the world, including at least one Canadian First Peoples community and culture.
- Rights and responsibilities of individuals regionally and globally.

Grade 3

Big Ideas

- Learning about indigenous peoples nurtures multicultural awareness and respect for diversity.
- People from diverse cultures and societies share some common experiences and aspects of life.

Content

- Cultural characteristics and ways of life of local First Peoples and global indigenous peoples.
- Aspects of life shared by and common to peoples and cultures.

Grade 4

Big Ideas

- Interactions between First Peoples and Europeans lead to conflict and cooperation, which continues to shape Canada's identity.

Content

- Early contact, trade, cooperation, and conflict between First Peoples and European peoples.
- The history of the local community and of local First Peoples communities.

Grade 5

Big Ideas

- Immigration and multiculturalism continue to shape Canadian society and identity.
- Canadian institutions and government reflect the challenge of our regional diversity.

Content

- The changing nature of Canadian immigration over time.
- Participation and representation in Canada's system of government.

Grade 6

Big Ideas

- Complex global problems require international cooperation to make difficult choices for the future.
- Systems of government vary in their respect for human rights and freedoms.

Content

- Global poverty and inequality issues, including class structure and gender.
- Roles of individuals, governmental organizations, and NGO's, including groups representing indigenous peoples.

Grade 7

Big Ideas

- Religious and cultural practices that emerged during this period have endured and continue to influence people.

Content

- Features and characteristics of civilizations and factors that lead to their rise and fall.
- Origins, core beliefs, narratives, practices, and influences of religions, including at least one indigenous to the Americas.
- Interactions and exchanges between past civilizations and cultures, including conflict, peace, trade, expansion, and migration.
- Social, political, legal, governmental, and economic systems and structures, including at least one indigenous to the Americas.

Connections and Extensions

The connections and extensions for diversity education are vast and quite possibly endless within the BC Curriculum and our BC classrooms. Diversity is directly connected to personal, societal, and global realms, as described throughout this assignment. In a world that is ever-changing in complexity and with the more frequent movement of people from one place to another, including diversity education in today's classrooms as we nurture the next generations of 'educated citizens' has become increasingly important. Our society is shifting from the historical "us and them" towards a movement of taking steps to work together and

connect while honouring the diversity in our midst and the benefits that diversity has in all levels of our society. By providing an education that supports and accepts the diversity locally, globally, and unpacks how diversity was treated in our history is a significant step in supporting the nurturing of 'educated citizens' for our world.

The curricular integration opportunities for diversity education are also significant. The English Language Arts program lends itself to many opportunities for the incorporation of diversity education. Making well thought out decisions around what literature a teacher has in their classroom library and what pieces of literature are incorporated into assignments is, I believe, one of the priorities in teaching diversity. It is through seeing and learning about "others" in our local and global world that students' knowledge and awareness will be expanded. Connected to that, incorporating diverse art forms and traditions (both local and global) into our Arts Education programs is another way of providing connections and outlooks that go beyond our local views and awareness. This includes a diverse look at dance, drama, visual arts, and music, which helps to develop in students an appreciation for art forms that go beyond what they have possibly grown up with. Physical and Health Education may not seem like such an obvious connection. However, I believe that when we learn to care for ourselves and honour ourselves, we are learning how to contribute that into the relationships we have with people whom we know and people whom we encounter. The communication skills students develop is crucial to making connections and honouring the diversity of our world. One of the Big Ideas in the grade six curriculum is "we experience many changes in our lives that influence how we see ourselves and others." In the exploration of this Big Idea, a teacher may enter into teaching about bullying, stereotyping, and discrimination while also looking at the influences that individual identities have. As students learn more about these topics, they will begin to be able to move that learning about themselves and transfer it to the people around them and in our world. Science may not seem like such a prominent place to make connections. However, a teacher could incorporate into the classroom learning a look at different sustainability practices in communities locally and globally, including looking at how Indigenous people use and honour resources. While not directly connected to our diversity as humans, when we look at the plants, animals, and landforms in our world, diversity within our environment is facing us directly. To use this embraced and celebrated model of diversity, I believe, connects directly to how we are called to embrace, celebrate, and honour the diversity in our world. The BC Curriculum has inspiring connections for incorporating diversity education and helping to make it a "norm" in our schools and our society.

When we empower students to think creatively and critically, we are allowing students to examine their thinking and, as a result of that, look at how others may be thinking with an open mind. Students are equipped through these skills to challenge their ideas and thoughts as well as the ideas and opinions of those around them. This is crucial for diversity education as for some students, they will be engaging in content and ideas that go beyond what they may encounter in their home lives and social groups. It is through some of the facets of these two Core Competencies in the BC Curriculum that students will gain the skills needed to embrace what is offered in diversity education fully. Some of these facets include

"analyzing and critiquing," "questioning and investigating," "reflecting and assessing," "creating and innovating," and "evaluating and developing."

Through all of this education, students are encountering an awareness of the possible issues that may be exhibited as diversity is embraced more intentionally in our local, national, and global world. Equipping students to become familiar and comfortable with diversity is connected to the social responsibilities we all have and that action that is, at times, required of us. To expect students to embrace diversity, we also need to teach parts of our history where diversity was not welcomed or honoured. It is through teaching the parts of our story as a society that we are not proud of that we are helping to ensure that the mistreatment of groups of people does not repeat itself. When calling for action and equipping a generation of students to stand up for what is right, we need to teach our history and help students learn from it.

I feel honoured to have been part of both the public school system and an Independent First Nations school during my K-12 education. Having both of these educational experiences provided me with first-hand experience of how diversity was being embraced and taught. At the time of my public school education, there was still a significant amount of "us and them." Certain groups of students received specific supports and had different expectations in the public school system. During my three years at the First Nations School, as a non-indigenous student, I was surprised at how equal the expectations and supports were. While I was part of the minority group in this education experience, the same was expected and invited from me as it was from my peers; something that I did not see to be the case in my public school experience. As an adult, I have been intentional about participating in educational experiences that help me to embrace further and honour the diversity of our society and world and honour the experiences that the "other" has — knowing that when we come together in our diversity, we are calling out a greater way of living and being together.

Diversity education has a place in every aspect of our classrooms, schools, and teaching. The connections and extensions can be made within the walls of our schools, outside of our schools in our communities, through partnerships with classrooms in another part of our world, through videos showing diversity and through bringing in speakers from other backgrounds. Teachers today have an opportunity to nurture today's students to embrace diversity in a way that we are still striving for.

Personal views, beliefs and experiences in relation to your topic

Diversity education is an integral part of both the teaching of Social Studies and the general education of young people. We are living at a time when being able to connect with people who may not be like you is crucial. Employers expect this of employees, and families are experiencing this in both their homes and communities. Schools are faced with this every day, and churches to have found themselves facing a changing demographic. Gender, backgrounds, culture, religion, socio-economics – our communities, schools, workplaces, and our world has become diverse, and teachers have a responsibility for equipping students to be prepared to live in the midst of and support the diversity around them. This education is not just about

who is in our midst who creates a diverse community but who is in our world, how others live, and how people lived in our history. All these pieces have something important to teach about acceptance, community, partnership, and expanding our worldview and understanding of what makes our world and environment.

Teaching how people who are different from us in our local, national, and international contexts is learning that will serve our young people for their whole lives. We do not live in a world where we can only think about ourselves; indeed, our lives are enriched when we can embrace the diversity both around us, and the diversity we learn about that impacts us. Compassion and understanding come with learning. At a time when there is a good chance that during a student's education they will share space with a refugee student, with someone who has moved from a faraway place, or with someone of a different cultural or religious background as teachers, we have a role in diversifying our literature and our teaching. By doing so, we are supporting the development of a generation of citizens who will embrace the diversity of our world.

My personal experiences influenced my choice of this topic based on the significant importance I believe this topic holds. I have had the privilege of having regular opportunities to work with diverse groups of people and learn about the diversity of our world. In my career as a Director of a Retreat and Conference Centre, we practiced radical hospitality, welcoming people of all backgrounds and experiences. There wasn't an "us and them" model, but we lived in the belief that every person who walked onto the site had something to contribute from their personal lives and experiences that could, in turn, impact each of us. In the Anglican Church, I have been part of the shift to welcoming and honouring those of all genders and socioeconomic status. I have also spent many hours sitting with our Indigenous Elders learning alongside, imagining what self-determination might look like, and being transformed by their teaching and history. I was a representative to the World Council of Churches Assembly in 2013 held in Busan, South Korea. This meeting gathered people from all over the world and welcomed a diversity of language, practices, age, gender, background, socioeconomic status, opinions, education, and cultures. And yet, amid our diversity, we were gathering together to speak one universal truth and stand up for what is right and just. We came together to address present-day public issues while also setting the policies and goals of the organization. My life has been transformed by the diversity of people I have had the privilege of working and learning alongside.

Role in teaching

Diversity Education goes beyond creating an inclusive atmosphere in my classroom, although that too holds significant importance. As a teacher, the content I choose has the opportunity to model to my students how we can learn from people of all backgrounds and experiences and how, when we come together, we can create something beautiful and be transformed by what each individual has to offer. Beginning in primary grades by taking a look at who is in our classroom and who is in our school before moving into who is in our community – taking the time to explore the most local demographics. In those transition years from primary to intermediate school opening students' worldview to include the provincial, national

and global community as a way to look at the diversity in our world that they might not see every day in their local communities.

In my teaching, I will include resources and lessons that model the diversity of our world. Creating a classroom with literature that shows peoples of all backgrounds and stories, I believe, is one of the first steps to living amidst diversity. In English Language Arts, I would pull on literature and writing activities that challenge the "norm" and expand students' thinking and invite critical thinking and analysis. Health and Career, for all grade levels, provides the opportunity to learn about healthy relationships, honouring the other, and ourselves, preventing discrimination, stereotyping and bullying and developing skills to work together.

The Social Studies curriculum brings a significant amount of connections for diversity education. In primary grades, I would engage in units that look at human needs, co-operation, and similarities and differences in families. Expanding from there into the language and cultural characteristics of Canadian society, a look at the local Indigenous people and culture in our community, and cultural similarities and differences. Arriving at intermediate grades, I would be looking to enter even more deeply into the diversity of Indigenous cultures in BC and within Canada while also taking a look at the interactions between European and Indigenous peoples. With immigration and the arrival of refugees into our communities increasing drastically over recent years, I see this as an essential unit to look at the experience of immigrants and begin to understand where they are coming from and why they desire to move into Canada. If possible, for these two unit ideas, I would try to bring in local people to come and tell their stories. Inviting Indigenous peoples from the community to share their experience and also to work with the refugee and immigration services locally to bring in either someone who holds this story and experience or someone who supports people arriving into Canada. Our intermediate curriculum also provides the opportunity to look at Canadian identity and how cultural identity influences that alongside the essential documents that govern our country (i.e.: the Charter) as well as those that guide our country (i.e.: Convention on the Rights of a Child). In the midst of a diverse world, these documents bring expectations of the fair and equal treatment of all peoples, no matter their background. By grade six and seven looking into our history to see where diversity was not honoured is also meaningful learning: Aboriginal land claims, same-sex marriage, the role of women, the Holocaust, to name a few.

I hope my students will both experience a welcoming and diverse classroom while also engaging in lessons across all academic areas that promote diversity education, both by looking at our present day world and also looking at the history which has been part of the formation of our world today.