

Stages of Multicultural School Transformation

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Status Quo

Traditional educational practices are maintained with no critique of existing inequities in any aspect of the school or the education system. Curricula, pedagogies, counseling practices, and all other aspect of education continue to reflect primarily White, male, upper middle class, Christian, and other privileged perspectives and approaches.

Heroes and Holidays (Food, Festivals, & Fun)

Small changes to curricula or classroom materials focus exclusively on surface-level cultural traits, often based on generalizations or stereotypes. Multicultural education is practiced as an international food fair or a celebration of a particular representative of a group. Students make headdresses or tomahawks to learn about Native American culture. Teachers purchase and display a poster of a famous woman or African American figure (usually during the paralleling history "month").

Intercultural Teaching and Learning (Cultural Dictionary)

Teachers study the customs and behaviors of the cultures from which their students come in an attempt to better understand how they should treat those students. They may have a handbook that describes how they should related to African-American students, Latino students, Asian American students, Native American students, and other groups based on an interpretation of the traditions and communication styles of those particular groups.

Human Relations (Why-Can't-We-All-Just-Get-Along)

Members of the school community are encouraged to celebrate differences by making connections across various group identities. Teachers show an enthusiasm for learning about "other" cultures beyond the Intercultural Teaching and Learning approach, drawing on the personal experiences of students so that the students learn from each other. Diversity is seen as an asset that enriches the classroom experience.

Selective Multicultural Education (We Did Multicultural Education LAST Month)

Recognizing the inequities in various aspects of education and the need to address them, teachers and administrators initiate one-time or temporary programs. They might call together a town meeting to discuss racial conflict or hire a consultant to help teachers diversify curricula. They might create a program to encourage girls to pursue math and science interests. This approach is usually reactive—in response to a particular issue or critique that has become public.

Transformative Multicultural Education (Social Justice and Equity Education)

All education practice begins with a determination to make all aspects of schools and schooling equitable and to ensure that all students have the opportunity to reach their full potential as learners. All educational practices that benefit white, male, upper-middle class, or any group to the detriment of other groups is transformed to ensure equity.