University of Puerto Rico in Humacao

English Department

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS: DIVERSITY

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Every day in the news, it becomes more evident how diversity is not accepted. The word diversity is perhaps the most human characteristic we could have because we are all unique. As a teacher, talking to the students about diversity is not just handing a flyer with a random piece of information. Diversity is a core value that must be fostered every day through different instructional activities.

My practice group was a very heterogeneous group of students with a variety of conditions, learning needs, difficulties, and personalities. Since the beginning, I noticed that students were struggling to accept that everyone is different and that we do not need to care about other people's differences, let alone make fun of it. I was determined to target this value to the point that I decided to base my Special Project on the acceptance of diversity. Throughout the time where I got to teach my kids, I made sure to involve each and every student in the process of language acquisition. Specially those who seemed to be cast away by their classmates.

Because of diversity being ignored, the school grounds have to work with cases of bullying, discrimination, and constant disagreements. Just the way it happens with adults in the professional fields, students at an elementary level are only learning about their identities and other's. Is the teacher the one responsible for nurturing the values that humanity so desperately needs in order to see a change. The special project was titled ELACS Diversity and consisted of a wall painting that presents a bunch of funny doodles all jumbled up and happy. The objective behind this project was to have the students reflect every day and think about what makes them unique and how important it is to learn to live in a society respecting all our differences.

Teachers are part of the individual development and growth of students while they are in the classroom/school. In my experience during practice, I saw kids fight each other around the school halls. I saw kids hit each other and throw hurtful comments and insults that they probably don't even really understand. I also saw teacher walk by the incidents without saying a word or attempting to stop it. Student fights outside the classroom is a "school guardian" thing. I was advised by teachers to ignore it, no matter how wrong it felt, because students wont

respect my word. They talked to me about different situations that have taken place in the school where teachers get in trouble for trying to deal with student whose anger is out of control. They said I can even get hurt trying to separate fighting kids.

So I sat and thought that there must be a way of attending the situation which is in fact, a result of not accepting diversity in all its forms; there is a diversity of opinions, looks, beliefs, traditions, ideals; not just physical appearances or music tastes. The answer that comes to my head is of course, education. After a whole practice experience and after letting myself get involved with the student culture, I understand that diversity must be targeted, urgently.