

IMPLEMENTING EFFECTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR DIVERSE GROUP OF LEARNERS

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Abstract: *Diverse learners are those students who live in rural areas; are homeless, migrant, neglected, or delinquent or attend schools in districts that receive impact aid for diverse learners. Teachers and parents place a high priority on strengthening programs to improve outcomes for diverse learners. Although a majority of teachers feel they are able to deliver instructions effectively to meet individual students' learning needs. Educationists can make curriculum and instruction both accessible and engaging for all learners, resulting in increased opportunities for learning success.*

Introduction: Once the diverse categories of students are identified, educators can work to address their individual needs through additional guidance, planning, and support. Effort and time spent now considering the educational needs of a broad base of diverse learners can help states, school districts, and schools lay the foundation for curricula that is tied to rigorous expectations—yet is flexible and accessible—and helps secure the opportunity for all students to learn. When new technologies move beyond their initial stage of development, innovations in curriculum design, teaching strategies, and policies will be driven by the needs of students "at the margin," those for whom present technologies are least effective—most prominently, students with disabilities. The beneficiaries of these innovations will be ALL students.

The evidence that high-quality education before the child's fifth birthday can yield lifetime benefits is undebatable. However, many schools do not have the opportunity to work with children at such a young age. Thus, they must start work closing the achievement gap in later years. Burriss and Welner (2005) concluded that when "all students—those at the bottom as well as those at the

top of the [achievement] gap—have access to first-class learning opportunities, all students' achievement can rise."

Hodgkinson (2003) highlighted another model—the Schools of the 21st Century—that regarded students as whole persons in their family context. This "is one of the most successful models for putting together all of the factors ... that contribute to the positive academic, emotional, and social development of young children" including (1) school-based programs; (2) strong links between early childhood and schools; (3) strong parental support and involvement; (4) universal access; (5) a focus on children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development; (6) strong staff training and development; and (7) a commitment to serving working families.

Teachers promote critical thinking when they make the rules of the classroom culture explicit and enable students to compare and contrast them with other cultures. Students can develop cross-cultural skills in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. For such learning to take place, however, teachers must have the attitudes, knowledge, and skills to make their classrooms effective learning environments for all students. Given the opportunity, students can participate in learning communities within their schools and neighborhoods and be ready to assume constructive roles as workers, family members, and citizens in a global society.

A. Recovery strategies for Culturally and Ethnically Diverse Students

The level of the family's socioeconomic resources is associated with success in school but is conditioned by other factors, such as immigrant status. Prior education in the country of origin is associated with success in school. Intact family and home support systems are associated with success in school. Not surprisingly, unaccompanied minors and students from single-parent families are at greater risk of failure in school.

Strategy 1

Show students that you care by getting to know their individual needs and strengths and sharing their concerns, hopes, and dreams: Students tend to want

to participate and do their best when a teacher is nurturing and caring we should care more genuinely for our children and teach them to care.. Of course we want academic achievement for our students, she notes, but "we will not achieve even that unless our children believe they themselves are cared for and learn to care for others" (Nodding,2005)

Strategy 2

Understand students' home cultures to better comprehend their behavior in and out of the classroom. Educators must understand and respect the many different ways of being a parent and expressing concern about the education of one's children Punjabi parents support their children's education by requiring that homework be done and ensuring that their youngsters do not "hang out" with other students but instead apply themselves to schoolwork Parental involvement is well established as being correlated with student academic achievement (Epstein, 2005).

Strategy 3

Encourage active participation of parents or guardians: Parents and guardians are a child's first teachers, but they are not always aware of the ways in which they mold children's language development and communication skills. Children learn their language at home; the more interaction and communication they have at home, the more children learn. Teachers can support this crucial role by sharing information about the link between home communication and children's learning. Parents may not be aware of how they support their children's academic efforts when they discuss the importance of education and take them to informal educational resources in the community.

Strategy 4

Tap into students' backgrounds to enhance learning.: Students' self-esteem and motivation are enhanced when teachers elicit their experiences in classroom discussions and validate what they have to say. Young people become more engaged in lessons when they are brought into the initial dialogue by being asked what they know about the topic and what they want to know. One way in which

teachers can ensure recognition of students' contributions is to use "semantic webbing." At the beginning of learning a new topic, the teacher asks students what they know about that topic; the simplest way to do this is to brainstorm a multitude of associations with the topic.

Strategy 5:

Choose culturally relevant curriculum and instructional materials that recognize, incorporate, and reflect students' heritage and the contributions of various ethnic groups: Whenever possible, teachers adapt the curriculum to focus lessons on topics that are meaningful to students. This kind of focus allows students to practice language, thinking, reading, and writing skills in real, meaningful, and interactive situations. Students also come to realize that teachers value and appreciate each child's culture and language.(Rodriguez, 1992)

Strategy .6

Identify and dispel stereotypes: If the teacher allows sexist or racist language and stereotypes to pass unchallenged, students will be harmed in two ways: (1) by the demeaning depiction of their group, which may become part of their self-concept and (2) by the limitations they will feel on their ability to live and work harmoniously with others in their classroom and in their society, (Weis and Fine ,2001)

Strategy 7

Create culturally compatible learning environments: According to Tharp (1992), teaching and learning are more effective when they are contextualized in the experiences, skills, and values of the community and when learning is a joint productive activity involving both peers and teachers. Learning is furthered by "instructional conversations"—dialogues between teachers and learners about their common learning activities.

Strategy 8:

Use cooperative learning strategies: Children who have an opportunity to work in cooperative learning groups with fellow students of other races and ethnicities

get to know those students as real people rather than as stereotypes. As students learn together and get to know one another, mutual respect and friendships can develop.

Strategy 9

Capitalize on students' cultures, languages, and experiences: When students are used to caring for other children at home, they have a foundation for cooperative learning and peer teaching. They can succeed with cooperative learning and peer teaching if they are given the opportunity to use them and the support of the teacher. If children are accustomed to having responsibilities in caring for their physical environment at home, they often feel comfortable in caring for and managing the school environment as well.

Strategy 10:

Integrate the arts in the curriculum: Nothing makes learning come alive more than engaging students in arts activities that encourage dialogue on issues that are important to them. Providing opportunities for students to express themselves through the visual and performing arts enables them to learn about and develop their talents and multiple intelligences: not only verbal and mathematical intelligences but also visual, spatial, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal intelligences (Gardner, 1983).

Strategy 11:

Promote students' health. Caring for students includes positively influencing their decisions related to their physical well-being. Congress passed the Child Nutrition Act in June 2004, requiring school districts to craft "wellness" policies. Such policies should include goals for nutrition education and ways to increase the physical activity of all students. To promote healthier eating habits, teachers can assign research projects comparing the calories in fast foods in various restaurants, soft drinks (including diet sodas), breakfast foods, and snacks (fried versus baked chips, the nutrition facts about various kinds of microwave popcorn

Strategy 12:

Develop community ties and build community schools: Teachers can explore community schools as models for an educational approach that puts children at the center and addresses cognitive, social, emotional, and physical needs and strengths. (Blank & Berg, 2006)

Strategy 13:

Incorporate multiple forms of assessment: Asking students to review their portfolios bimonthly and select the best examples of their work for that time period coaches them in self-assessment and enables them to see their progress. The teacher can share these portfolios on parents' night to show how students are doing. In addition, if students don't perform well on a standardized test used in a high-stakes event, such as promotion to the next grade

B. Recovery strategies for Linguistically Diverse Students: An enrichment bilingual/ESL program must meet students' developmental needs: linguistic, academic, cognitive, emotional, social, physical. Schools need to create a natural learning environment in school, with lots of natural, rich language both oral and written, used by students and teachers; meaningful, "real world" problem-solving; all students working together; media-rich learning (video, computers, print); challenging thematic units that get and hold students' interest; and using students' bilingual-bicultural knowledge to bridge to new knowledge across the curriculum.

Strategy 1.

Establish truly bilingual classrooms: A school that respects the language and culture of its ethnically and linguistically diverse students (and their parents or guardians) develops educational situations that maximize the resources these students bring to school. Instead of being confused and distressed by trying to cope in a language they cannot understand, students continue to learn content and skills and develop a feeling of efficacy as well as belonging to their new school. If the school context does not allow for this linguistic and cultural diversity, students are more likely to feel alienated and confused.

Strategy 2

Embrace dual-language strategies. Students proficient in languages other than English learn more effectively in dual-language learning situations. They continue to learn content in their native language while learning English as a second language by interacting with monolingual English-speaking students who are also learning a second language.

Strategy 3

Use integrated, holistic approaches to language experiences for second-language learners instead of rote drill and practice: Rote drill and practice are boring and lack meaning for young people; holistic experiences are much more engaging.

Strategy 4

Enhance language learning with computers and peer tutors: The kinds of software used for language learning also make a difference. Some language-learning programs simply translate drill and practice into computer formats. Other programs—desktop publishing software, for example—motivate students to write in their second language, since they know that their writing will be edited collaboratively and then published, to be read by classmates and parents or guardians.

C. Recovery Strategies for Students with disabilities: The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) requires that by age 16, the individual education plan (IEP) for a student receiving special education services include a statement of transition services, with a course of study that will assist the student in reaching his or her post-high school goals which must include:

1. Arrange to maintain students in their schools of origin to eliminate challenges associated with school mobility.
2. Support consistent school attendance and academic progress.
3. Award partial credit for prior work completed in another school system.
4. Expand course possibilities to include independent study, online learning, and computer-based course modules.

5. Facilitate access to innovative and alternative programs, including those administered by other agencies.

Collaboration with community agencies and volunteers is instrumental in ensuring positive outcomes associated with implementation of many strategies. Consistent school attendance can be promoted by agencies helping to meet the basic needs of homeless children, such as food, clothing, and shelter, as well as addressing any underlying medical or health concerns.. Further, while peer mentors can work to connect homeless children to the school community and positive peer influences, community agencies can provide adult mentors who have knowledge of at-risk youth and can guide and support their postsecondary and career goals.

D. Recovery Strategy for Neglected and Delinquent Youth

Youth in child welfare and juvenile delinquency systems need and deserve high-quality services and supports to foster their successful transition to postsecondary education, employment, and adulthood. Although public opinion favors the rehabilitation and treatment of these youth Risk factors for poor academic achievement include poverty, emotional and behavioral disorders, substance abuse, antisocial peer models, high mobility, and negative childhood experiences. Six principles are important in reforming education services for the neglected and delinquent:

1. early education
2. quality education services
3. a focus on measuring outcomes
4. support services
5. interagency collaboration and communication
6. within-agency and cross-agency leadership

Early intervention and education for children in the welfare or delinquency system, as well as their caregivers, may serve to lessen the prevalence of severe

behavior problems as the children grow older. For example, therapeutic preschool programs such as the Hand in Hand program, have shown success in targeting the needs of young children in foster care who had been subjected to abuse or neglect and had severe behavior problems

E. Recovery Strategy for Migrant Students

Unfortunately, some of the urgent needs of migrant children are beyond the typical scope of most schools; thus, it becomes necessary to collaborate with social service agencies to improve overall outcomes for these children and their families. Research findings and case studies have shown that migrant students face multiple challenges for learning: they often live in uninhabitable conditions, face health risks, and have little or no sociocultural stability. Each of these factors aggravates the risk to psychological and social well-being independently, and when combined they make academic achievement extremely challenging for these children.

1. Provide multiple representations of information (e.g., printed or spoken text, vocabulary support, strategies and devices to support memory and transfer).
2. Provide for multiple forms of expressing and acting on learning (e.g., written and voice responses, word processing, word prediction software, and other assistive technology).
3. Provide for multiple ways to engage students (e.g., individual choices, collaborative work tasks, setting of personal goals and expectations).

The Right to Education should ensure that migrant students get the opportunity to meet the same challenging state content and student performance standards that all children are expected to meet. School districts provide educational and support services that assist migrant students to overcome educational disruption, cultural and language barriers

Conclusion

The success of any public education reform effort will be tied, at least in part, to the ability to address appropriately the academic and social-behavior needs of diverse learners. Unfortunately, many diverse learners have historically been marginalized by the education system and may well have been recipients of practices that served to alienate, segregate, and reject them (Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1995; Riele, 2005). By redefining the focus from one of "fixing students" to one of providing high-quality education that is responsive to individual needs This system will invariably improve experiences and outcomes for all students. Rose and Meyer (2000) resulting in tremendous improvement in Academic Achievement among diverse categories of learners.

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