

Concluding my time at Michigan State University, as a teacher education student, I had the choice of where I wanted to pursue my internship. Chicago was one of the options and being young and naive, I was ready for the challenge. During my internship, I met many friends that were going through the same thing. One of the friends who I met along the way was Drexton. We spent our time together discussing how we can best support our students, our challenges, and our successes. From day one of meeting Drexton, I could sense that he was very committed to multicultural education. He was so excited to teach students different perspectives and to help students relate to the learning happening in the classroom. Once finding out that I had to interview a person about multicultural education, I immediately thought of Drexton.

After speaking with Drexton on the phone, he let me know that he now teaches fifth grade in Georgia. He interviewed at the school because of the diversity. He has a big class size of 23 students. Growing up, Drexton noticed that education was failing children that were intelligent but perhaps didn't fit into the box of what most people thought were "good students". He could not let this continue; he knew he had to be an educator to help make change. He pursued teaching at Michigan State University because it is known for one of the best teacher education programs in the country. He went on to complete his master's degree in Cultural and Socio-Economic Impacts in the Classroom. From the readings, Daniels and Varghese argue that, "teacher education is increasingly marginalizing the relevance of teacher subjectivity and recentering Whiteness, especially in its uptake of practice-based teacher

education” (Daniels & Varghese, 2019). Teacher education programs are very powerful because they help create the educators of today and the future. Too often, teacher education programs are continuing the horrible cycle and are failing the education students. Drexton mentioned that during his undergrad, the focus was multicultural education. At Michigan State, education students are not continuing the cycle of Whiteness and education.

Drexton feels as if his biggest challenges with multicultural education are the things that he cannot control. For example, the testing and assessments that he gives his students. He knows that the tests and assessments are not culturally responsive and there should be a change. The administration at his school does not think there is a need for changing the tests and assessments. Drexton feels the tension between his school’s curriculum and multicultural education. He mentioned that the people who are creating the curriculum are not people who look like the majority of the students who are using the curriculum. There are a lot of gaps and missing information that Drexton works hard at communicating to his students. He believes multicultural education is extremely important and he works hard every day to best support the different cultures in his classroom. He stated, “multicultural education is something that has to be in our schools if we have any hope at being successful educators. We need to make sure that our students can see themselves in all aspects of our classroom and teaching. Students should be able to see people that look like them in their classroom library and the teaching.” Thinking back to the readings from this course, G. Gay argues that, “the education of racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse students should connect in-school learning to out-of-school living; promote educational equity and excellence; create community among individuals from different cultural, social, and ethnic backgrounds; and develop students’ agency, efficacy, and

empowerment” (Gay, 2013). This quote is relevant because Drexton states that he is committed to teaching his students by connecting in-school and out-of-school living by seeing themselves in the classroom. Drexton is proud to be a teacher of a diverse population.

Drexton implements multicultural education through his reading materials. He makes sure students are seeing themselves in the material. An interesting way Drexton includes multicultural education is through this discipline plan. He mentioned that he does not involve administration in discipline procedures. At his school, administration has certain guidelines that they have to follow. If he does not communicate the behavior to the administration, then students will not be at risk of detentions, being expelled, or other harsh consequences. He views a successful student as someone who works hard to better themselves in some aspect of their lives. He knows one size does not fit all and that there are many ways to educate the whole child. It does not always have to be academics, but they should be trying to grow in some way to become a healthier, more educated and well-rounded person. He also makes sure that he is extremely honest with his students. He teaches his students about the things that have happened in their lives and the things that have happened with people who lived within their culture.

After hanging up the phone, I realized how excited and grateful Drexton was for having the conversation. His passion is being a culturally responsive teacher. From the readings, Ladson-billings refers to the exceptional teachers from the study, “All of the teachers identified strongly with teaching. They were not ashamed or embarrassed about their professions. Each had chosen to teach and, more importantly, had chosen to teach in this low-income, largely African American school district” (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Over the years of knowing Drexton, I

have learned so much more about multicultural education and how to be culturally responsive.

This is not a topic that he is ashamed or scared of. Drexton is excited to make change and support his students the best way he can. Drexton is another exceptional teacher. He will continue to fight for what each student deserves; a good education.

References

Daniels, J. R., & Varghese, M. (2019). Troubling Practice: Exploring the Relationship Between Whiteness and Practice-Based Teacher Education in Considering a Raciolinguicized Teacher Subjectivity. *Educational Researcher*.

Gay, G. (2013). Teaching to and through cultural diversity. *Curriculum Inquiry*, 43(1), 48-70.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into practice*, 34(3), 159-165.

Transcript

I called Drexton on the phone. After catching up, these are the questions I asked.

1. What is home to you?
 1. Home is currently Stone Mountain, Georgia. I currently teach in Duluth at Chesney Elementary School.
2. What grade do you teach?
 1. I teach 5th grade and I teach all of the subjects.
3. How long have you been teaching at/in this school?
 1. This is my 4th year teaching as well as my 4th year at both Chesney and teaching 5th grade.
4. What brought you to teaching?
 1. Growing up I looked around and saw education failing a lot of kids that I knew were intelligent, but perhaps didn't fit into the box of what most people thought good education.
5. Do you have any other roles at your school?
 1. I run cooking club with 4th and 5th graders. I am also an e-class innovator, which means that I am someone that teachers can go to with technology questions. I also am a STEM innovator for my school, which means that I'm a teacher that is knowledgeable about STEM on our grade level.
6. How long have you been teaching?
 1. This is my 4th year teaching at the same school.
7. Where did you attend undergrad and/or receive your Master's from?
 1. I attended Michigan State University for my undergrad, and I received my master's from Michigan State in Cultural and Socio Economic impacts in the classroom.
8. How many students do you teach?
 1. I teach 23 students.
9. Can you share any demographics of your classroom?
 1. I have a very diverse classroom, I have Hispanic, Asian, and African American students in my classroom.
10. Does your classroom have a Theme or motto? No. We all just try our best.
11. What do you know and understand about multicultural education?
 1. I know that multicultural education is extremely important and that it's something that has to be in our schools if we have any hope of being successful as educators. We need to make sure that our students can see themselves in all aspects of our classroom and teaching. Students should be able to see people that look like them in your classroom library, and your teaching.
12. Is multicultural education important to you and your teaching?
 1. Multicultural education is something that is extremely important to me and my teaching. I try extremely hard to be culturally relevant in every aspect of my teaching, but especially in my everyday reactions to students, my discipline plan and the materials I use in my teaching.
13. Are there any challenges you have with multicultural education?
 1. I have many challenges with multicultural education and they almost all have to do with things that I can't control as much as I would like. Many of them have to do with testing and the assessments that we give these students. I feel many of the tests and assessments are nowhere near enough multicultural for our students to do well on.

14. How do you incorporate multicultural education into your classroom?
1. I implement it in my reading materials mainly. My classroom library is especially diverse and multicultural. I also make sure that the texts that we use throughout the curriculum is as culturally diverse as I can make them. I also make sure that my discipline plan is as culturally relevant as it can be. What that entails is that I involve administrators as less as possible. I say this because they have certain guidelines that they need to follow that I don't have to.
15. How do you view your role in multicultural education?
1. I view it as providing students materials for them to learn about their cultures and be honest with them about things that have happened in their lives and the things that have happened with people who have lived within their culture.
16. What tensions do you see between the curriculum and multicultural education?
1. A lot, but the biggest is the fact that people who are creating the curriculum are not people who look like the majority of the students who use their curriculum.
17. How do you define a successful student?
1. I define a successful student as someone who works hard to better themselves in some aspect of their lives. It doesn't always have to be academics, but they should be trying to grow in some way to become a healthier, more educated and well-rounded person.
18. Are you proud of what you do?
1. I am extremely proud of my job. But even more, I am extremely proud of my students.