

These philosophers really opened my eyes to a lot of culturally relevant ideas in teaching. Culturally responsive teaching is defined much differently than I might have thought. Ladson-Billings (2009) described many teachers being “color-blind” instead of recognizing and honoring the different skin colors represented by their students. I think this is a very relevant argument today because racism still exists in various forms. Just taking a look at the demographic of school districts and how the teachers treat their jobs within those districts is a huge indicator that not all students are viewed as individuals at all times. Philosophers like Ladson-Billings and Delpit were concerned with culturally responsive teaching because it is always a relevant topic to be discussed. Unfortunately there will always be stereotypes and judgment, and these philosophers are concerned with teachers who might be unconsciously fostering “color-blindness”.

I loved some of the vignettes that Ladson-Billings presented. I especially appreciated the section about Pauline Dupree. She had so much respect for her job and what she did every day, and she was able to have a very candid conversation with her students about it. She dressed up every day because she worked “with the most important people in the world”, her students (41). She made all of her students feel important and worthy of education. I think this is a central part of culturally responsive teaching. If students feel worthy of their education, no matter what color their skin is, then the teacher has been able to teach through their culture to bring them into a greater understanding of being a part of it.

Shaw (2012) took this idea of culturally responsive teaching and applied to it the choral classroom by talking about teaching from “multiple perspectives” (77). She spoke of authenticity shortly after and why it is important when trying to teach in a culturally responsive way. In order for a teacher to provide an authentic experience with a particular piece, he or she

might want to bring in an expert on that particular kind of music. Not only does this show that the teacher isn't the only expert, but it empowers students to go out and do the same in other academic areas with which they might not be familiar. Shaw (2012) also advises allowing students to help with translation or pronunciation of a piece in a language that may be fluent for them. This also provides the same ideas as bringing in an expert, and empowers students to be the leaders of the process.

Delpit (2002) makes such an interesting argument for language within a culture. Even within towns in certain states, dialects can be found. I definitely see what she means in the dialect or “language” of African American culture. In honoring the “language” of another culture, teachers will learn not only about the other language but also about how it relates to their own language. I always feel this is such an area of tension in the U.S. when it comes to language. There is conflict about simple language barriers, like which signs to post in multiple languages and which to keep in English only. The U.S. is a melting pot, and people from all over the world come to live here. I think that Delpit’s point is that we can always relate back to our first language of familiarity, but to teach students with another language source takes a whole new perspective.

Sources

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