CREATING A CULTURALLY SENSITIVE CLASSROOM

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Culture is what gives every individual a sense of identity. It provides meaning to people on what happens to them every day. It influences them in making decisions, reacting to situations and formulating plans. Culture is present in all aspects of life.

This is also true in the school. Each student and teacher, even the administrators have their own culture. Their culture may vary depending on the location of their residences. There might be an instance that students, teachers and administrators share the same cultural heritage, beliefs and customs if they all belong to the same community. But chances are, this is a very rare situation. Most of the time, year in and year out, schools are bombarded with students coming from various places bringing with them their own unique culture and behavior. This makes the classroom a hodgepodge, a melting pot or in a localized lingo “halo-halo with ice cream on top” of different individual attitudes, view points and stand points in life.

This may pose as a problem to the teacher because for sure the class may be at risk of chaos due to conflicting ideas.

That is why the teacher must be able to create a culture sensitive classroom that caters mostly of the students coming from different cultural backgrounds. This can be done by identifying the lineage of students and carefully studying their norms and traditions. The teacher will be surprised to discover reasons why there are some students who are often absent due to family occasions or gatherings because family ties are important to their beliefs. At the same time teachers might also see why some students are tardy, procrastinating or hesitant in performing specific activities in the classroom.
Culture may have a huge contribution to this behavior because they might be experiencing the same treatment on their homes or their community.

Upon determining these salient features of the students, the teacher may now craft the lesson catering these factors so as to ensure that students are able to relate, engage and become participative in the classroom discussions. This will also give them a sense of belonging and importance that the teacher took time to understand their background sending them a message that their presence matter to the school and that they are acknowledged, understood and most importantly respected.

It is normal to experience a variety of behavior, reactions and way of thinking inside the classroom. It is very rare to find individuals that share the same traits, beliefs and viewpoints. Individual differences is not new to teachers. But what new is that this can be used as a tool to deliver quality, culture bound and relevant education.

References: