

Celebrating Diversity

I attended the Celebrating Diversity Workshop on November 3, 2002. I learned many things that during that day. I learned of different types of discrimination that I would have never thought about, such as discrimination with in races as well as against other races. I also learned that slang can and often does offend people. By going to this workshop I learned more about myself.

I would have never thought of discrimination with in a race. It didn't occur to me before attending this workshop that people discriminate others because of the family heritage that they have. An example would be a person of German descent would discriminate against a person of Irish descent and that person would turn around and discriminate against a person of Polish descent. I also learned that people discriminate against others on the basis of skin color, hair color, or personal style of dressing.

I understand that it is important to celebrate our differences but we need not to lose sight of the fact that we are all living in the same world and we are all human beings. It is important to express our differences, but we need to realize that in so many ways we are alike. As a teacher I need to incorporate our differences but also point out to the students how we are the same.

I have always enjoyed learning about other countries and cultures in those countries. I see now that my past has influenced my choices about this issue today. In my last two years of high school I became friends with two different international students. I learned much from them about their countries, Germany and Yugoslavia, and the cultures of those countries. By studying a January session in Hawaii focusing on the native cultures of the Polynesia Triangle also broadened my horizons of accepting other cultures. By acknowledging their ways of life,

ideas, and realizing what I had in common with them has helped shaped my life today. I realized that they had feelings, ideas, and a past, just as I did. Realizing that everyone has feelings and similarities, not just differences, is a large step toward progress no matter the age.

In my teaching career I hope to excite my students about learning of different cultures and countries. I would point out the differences but I would also ask them to think of the similarities in the ways that we live. I would emphasize that whether or not they believe with another's opinions or way of life, that person deserves your respect no matter their age.

I think it would be great if I could find a way to use my school system's curriculum to teach this concept. I would also incorporate all the subjects for a few units that would use differences and similarities to assist students in learning about other cultures. Culture is not a topic that just belongs in social studies but it can be a topic in all subject areas.

This workshop helped me realize the importance of the differences as well as the similarities among cultures and individuals. There are basic needs and desires that everyone possesses, however, when discrimination is present these similarities are neglected or forgotten all together.