

Carol Fike  
Celebrating Diversity Workshop  
Attended on November 4, 2007

Celebrating Diversity, what does that mean? That was all I knew going into this workshop. I had no idea what to expect and the better question in my mind was why the heck do I have to go? Confession time, so I am a small town girl thinking that no nothing ever happens but I must admit I learned a lot in those four hours. The main thing that I learned was that you cannot fully accept others until you are completely comfortable in your own skin. I also heard stories about people who were made fun of. All of this encouraged me to be a better teacher and to make sure that everyone is comfortable coming to school.

The main thing that I learned was that you cannot fully accept others until you are completely comfortable in your own skin. To be honest I thought I was completely comfortable with myself, knowing who I was and where I have come from, but we did an activity where you told a partner about all of the "groups" that you belonged, to such as female, middle class, heterosexual, etc., and to be honest I felt very uncomfortable and really did not like telling a stranger all of these things. Why? This taught me that I am not as comfortable with myself as I had thought, so this is something that I need to work on so that I can accept others, by accepting myself.

I also heard stories about people who were made fun of. I can remember in my own life moving around quite a bit, and during one move in particular I remember walking into the school and the people I met telling me that I did not belong because I was transplanted into that school. Other stories were people being different in size or disabled. I feel as though this

makes you who you are. It has made me think that no matter what you say you could always be offending others even if you do not realize it. Think before you speak.

All of this encouraged me to be a better teacher and to make sure that everyone is comfortable coming to school. If your students feel uncomfortable about going to school, they will not learn as well. You need to have a welcoming, trusting classroom environment. If this is the case than you will be able to talk to your students, know their background and how to help them. It will also help the students interact if they know it is a welcoming environment and they do not make fun of one another. If your students want to be at school, they will learn so much more and you will form a trusting community, which I find extremely important.

This workshop gave me new insights, sensitivity, and appreciation for my students and what they will be bringing into my classroom. When a student walks in the classroom door they bring their family with them, anything that is going on at home. They also bring these “groups” that they belong to in those doors. A student should never give up who they are to fit in with the rest of the class. That is one thing that elementary students need to be taught is that everyone is different and special and you need to accept them for who they are and what they stand for. We did another activity at the workshop where you were given a list of words like African American, native American, men, women, etc and you were suppose to write down the first word that came to mind. This activity taught me that I am not as knowledgeable about other groups as I would like to be, and the first word that popped into my head was not always the nicest and this taught me that I need to educate myself so I know more about other groups.

Everyone is judged at some point in their life. Some are judged on what they look like from the outside and others are just assumed. These stereotypes are placed on men, women,

African Americans, Native Americans, nationality, sexual orientation, where they are from, and how much money they have. Why does it have to be that way? Why not get to know the person before you label them, because you never know when you are going to need a friend. So from now on I would like to get to know the person rather than listening to the labels that other people give them or my first impression. As in a Dr. Seuss book, a person's a person no matter how small."