

Is Your Classroom Transformed?

Driving Change through Diversity and Globalization: Transformative Leadership in the Academy by James A. Anderson. This book significantly advances discussion of the mission of higher education in today's multicultural environment and global economy. It sets out the challenges and considerations that must be addressed by administrative leaders, by trustees, and others who shape the vision and direction of the institution – but most particularly by academic deans and faculty.

The author makes the case that diversity in disciplinary work contributes to the research agendas of individual faculty and their departments, aligns with scholarly values, and promotes such student learning goals as tolerance of ambiguity and paradox, critical thinking and creativity.

In other words, the evidence illustrates that students learn better in a diverse environment. The author offers a strategic vision of success, backed by theory and examples of effective application, for creating transformative change; and provides a roadmap to implementing inclusive pedagogical practices and curricula.

Examples from the book are shown at right and below. These tables offer faculty accessible reference points to gauge the degree to which their own classrooms are evolving toward diversity.

Book News writes, "The key to a college or university meeting 21st-century demands for greater excellence and improved national competitiveness, Anderson argues, is the ability to successfully incorporate diversity and globalism in the institution's basic philosophy and infrastructure. He offers a practical handbook to these challenges [and] calls for leaders to move beyond the current level of discourse about diversity and begin the work of changing the teaching and learning paradigm, transforming the curriculum, and empowering the voices of diverse students."

Permission to reprint selected tables from the book, and reviewers' online quotes, kindly granted by [Stylus Publishing, LLC](#).

Table 4.4

Characteristics of the Traditional and Transformed Classroom

Traditional Classroom	Transformed Classroom
Emphasis on traditional canon texts	Includes nontraditional texts
Emphasizes limited themes (often Eurocentric) and contexts	Includes a variety of themes and contexts
Promotes monocultural perspective	Encourages alternate perspectives
Emphasizes instructor and lecturer	Instructor facilitates collaborative learning
Deconstructs power of the instructor	Constructs voice and confidence of the student
Uses few innovative teaching strategies	Includes innovative and proven teaching strategies
Limits classroom to traditional indicators	Uses a variety of formative and summative classroom assessments

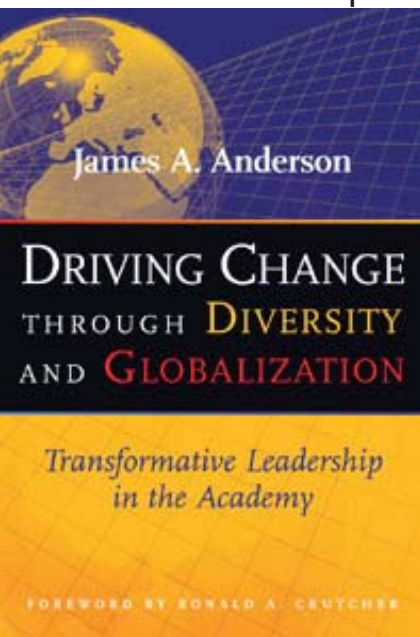


Table 4.3

Success Strategies for Diverse Students in Courses With Technical and Abstract Content

1. **Exploratory Activity and Questioning**
Prior to formal concept formation and model building, students use their own words.
2. **Continuous use of Real-World and Practical Examples**
3. **Idea First and Name Afterward**
Students are introduced to concepts by examination and observation of objects, situations, and phenomena. Knowledge and understanding come from “shared experience”; they are not just technical terms.
4. **Inferences Drawn from Models**
Students should have reasons for what they believe. They should feel free to express success, futility, and wonder in their own words. Early model building should be based on self-initiated activities and direct experience.
5. **Use of Analogies**
Students learn to move from relatively simple analogies to ones that are increasingly more complex.
6. **Early Identification of Bottlenecks**
“Bottlenecks” represent points in a course where students begin to have conceptual difficulty understanding what’s going on. They need to know where they are and what is happening. How do faculty adjust?
7. **Laboratory or Experiential Exercises Should Precede or Occur Simultaneously with Lecture**

Straight Talk Speakers’ Bureau Debunks Myths

Many people have questions about what it is like to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender:

- What makes people gay?
- How did your parents react?
- I think my friend is gay. What should I do?
- When did you decide to come out?
- Do you want to have children?

The **Straight Talk Speakers Bureau**, an educational service provided by NIU’s LGBT Resource Center, is made up of NIU students and others who volunteer to speak about their experiences as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender individuals, or heterosexual allies.

Students Philip Engleking, Megan Armstrong, and Mack Lewis are three such speakers who completed training on how to give public presentations on a subject that is often controversial and/or misunderstood. *The Multiculturalist* asked them what they learned through participating in the Bureau, and how they might apply that learning.

“I learned how to help people understand another point of view,” said Mack. “I’ve learned how to share my own experience in ways that help other people understand LGBT identity.”

Megan Armstrong added, “I learned how to deal with confrontational questions. When going to speak about a topic that is so personal, it can be difficult to not feel offended when someone attacks a part of you, but I have learned to listen to what they have to say because it is their opinion. I learned to respond respectfully with my opinion and realize that they may or may not take what I say to heart and that is okay.”

“After I graduate, I plan on being a health education teacher, so being open minded and having multicultural skills will help me create an open and fair classroom.”



Philip Engleking, Megan Armstrong, and Mack Lewis from the Straight Talk Speakers Bureau

The World is her Classroom

Before leaving NIU, marketing department chair Tanuja Singh made time for an interview with *The Multiculturalist*. One might assume that global marketing, her area of expertise for over twenty years, would inherently be multiculturalist in nature, but Tanuja explained how this might not always be so.

"In 1998 or '99, I attended the Multicultural Curriculum Transformation Institute [MCTI]. I realized my teaching examples were fairly Eurocentric, and focused on the economies of developed countries.

"Now, multiculturalism is obviously about much more than a person's country of origin. It's about gender, race, age, ability, and more. But I definitely broadened my focus to include more of the world's 200 or so countries.

"Providing diverse examples such as Africa, Egypt, Zimbabwe and Indonesia became my indirect method of weaving multiculturalism into my pedagogy.



The effect on students was pronounced! The thought of applying the traditional marketing exercise to a country they had never heard of – such as the Republic of Georgia – fired their imaginations and resulted in some very creative presentations.

"To balance the indirect method of discussing non-traditional examples, I also used the direct method of assigning students to develop every aspect of a marketing plan, for a product real or imagined, as it would apply to a foreign country.

"The product must be created, financed, developed, packaged, advertised, priced, shipped. Students must learn the legal trade issues involved. They must answer questions such as Does this country have warehouses? What is acceptable to say in the local advertising, and what subjects should be avoided? What are the environmental effects of

putting this product in that region? What flavors do the local people enjoy? And finally, during the presentation, I required that students speak the local language, even if only one word or phrase.

"As more 'uncommon' projects came to fruition, people became more open about discussing, and developed a deeper respect for, cultural differences.

"People became more open about discussing cultural differences."

Many American students think that America and Western Europe pretty much comprise the world. It was very gratifying to see

their perspectives broaden."

Was there any downside to this class project? "Not really. At the time I was pushing them, the students thought the work was very hard. Yet even today, I get emails from students who say it was the best learning experience they ever had.

"I agree with the idea that students live up – and down – to our expectations. If we make assignments too easy, we send a message that we believe that is their maximum capability, and they will buy into that. I believe a bit of extra challenge can encourage students to do things they never imagined they could."

Fifteen Common Misconceptions About Multicultural Education

The Multiculturalist *is pleased to reprint, with permission, the following article as a running feature. Part one was published in [Volume 2, Issue 2](#). Read the entire [article](#) online now, or stay tuned for future installments.*

3. Children's books about another culture are usually authentic. This is an especially common misconception. Teachers who want to share other cultures may unintentionally choose books that are racist or not representative of a particular group. Many of us can identify certain culturally inappropriate books, such as *The Story of Little Black Sambo* by Bannerman (1899), *The Five Chinese Brothers* by Bishop and Wiese (1939), or *The Seven Chinese Brothers* by Mahy (1990). Others are more subtle. A book that is often recommended (see Huck, Hepler, & Hickman, 1987) is *Tikki Tikki Tembo* (Mosel, 1968). The book does have a delightful repetitive pattern that many children enjoy. The text and illustrations, however, are inaccurate depictions of any Chinese. In the text, the first and most honored son had the grand long name of "Tikki tikki tembo-no sa rembo-chari bari ruchi-pip peri pembo." The message about Chinese names is less than flattering. People in the Southern United States would be appalled if parents in the People's Republic of China were reading stories to their children about Southerners who used to name their children long names such as Bubba Bubba Jimbo Kenny Ray Billy Bob.

The Council on Interracial Books for Children published *Guidelines for Selecting Bias-Free Textbooks and Storybooks* in 1980 (see Derman-Sparks, 1989). The guidelines suggest: 1) checking illustrations for stereotypes or tokenism, 2) checking the story line, 3) looking at the lifestyles (watching out for the "cute-natives-in-costumes" syndrome, for example), 4) weighing relationships between people, 5) noting the heroes, 6) considering the effect on a child's self-image, 7) considering the author's or illustrator's background, 8) examining the author's perspective, 9) watching for loaded words, and 10) checking the copyright date.

Other criteria are available to readers. For example, Rudine Sims Bishop (1993) has published guidelines in *Teaching Multicultural Literature in Grades K-8*.

4. Multicultural education just includes ethnic or racial issues. While ethnic and racial concerns are a large part of multicultural education, gender and socioeconomic diversity also are important. Children come from many types of homes, including those headed by lesbian or gay parents. Furthermore, people from lower socioeconomic environments often have more in common with one another than they do with those of similar racial or ethnic heritage from higher income levels (Strevy & Aldridge, 1994).

One source that is helpful in dispelling this myth is *Teaching With a Multicultural Perspective: A Practical Guide* (Davidman & Davidman, 1997). Sleeter and Grant (1993) also have written extensively about school goals for multicultural education. These include the promotion of "equal opportunity in the school, cultural pluralism, alternative life styles, and respect for those who differ and support for power equity among groups" (p. 171).

Gollnick and Chinn (1990) recommend five goals for multicultural education. These goals also emphasize issues beyond the boundaries of ethnic or racial issues. They include: 1) the promotion of strength and value of cultural diversity, 2) an emphasis on human rights and respect for those who are different from oneself, 3)

Continued

Fifteen Misconceptions

(continued)

the acceptance of alternative life choices for people, 4) the promotion of social justice and equality for all people, and 5) an emphasis on equal distribution of power and income among groups.

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Credits

Aldridge, J., Calhoun, C., & Aman, R. (2000). 15 misconceptions about multicultural education. *ACEI Focus on the Elementary*, 12(3), 1-4.

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Published twice yearly, **THE MULTICULTURALIST** is brought to you by the **Office of the Provost**. All members of the NIU community are invited to submit their multicultural methodology or success story to editor-in-chief **Donna Askins**. For all questions related to the Multicultural Curriculum Transformation Institute, contact mcti@niu.edu or call 815.753.8557.