It Is Never Too Soon: A Study of Kindergarten Teachers' Implementation of Multicultural Education in Florida's Classrooms

Guda Gayle-Evans
University of South Florida St. Petersburg

Abstract

This study assesses the level of inclusion of multicultural education materials and activities in kindergarten classrooms in the State of Florida. The researcher developed a two-part questionnaire which was mailed to one thousand kindergarten teachers selected by systematic sampling. Part one of the questionnaire contained seventy-eight items regarding the teacher, the students and the classroom structure. Part two asked teachers to respond to forty-three items relating to the physical environment of the classroom, instructional strategies, the curriculum and various content areas. The items in Part Two were based on three levels of inclusion with Level I indicating inclusion more than 80% of the time. Four hundred and seventy-seven teachers from fifty-four of Florida's sixty seven counties responded to the survey. Although there were some areas where teachers did include materials and activities such as ethnic holiday celebrations, overall, more could be done.

Introduction

The opening of the first public kindergarten in the United States in 1873 was an attempt by William Harris, Superintendent of Schools and United States Commissioner, to properly socialize young children. Harris had lost faith in the ability of the family to properly socialize young children. The role of the school then was to teach moral virtues of society to the poor and children of the slums (Spring, 1986). This later changed as the kindergarten was assigned to helping young children transition—physically, socially emotionally and cognitively—into the culture of the elementary school (Moyer, 2001). Today, however, many kindergartens are becoming more like a lower grade in the elementary school.

Most kindergartens in the United States serve five-year-olds. As of March 2000, thirty-six states, including The District of Columbia and Florida, require local school districts to offer kindergarten programs. In twelve states, including Florida, kindergarten attendance is mandatory. However, in Arizona and South Carolina parents may request a waiver of the requirement (Lohman, 2000). Presently, with over ninety-five percent of five-year-olds enrolled in kindergarten programs in the nation, the idea of universal education of five-year-olds is almost a reality (Morrison, 2001).

Why Multicultural Education Generally

Culture is the way we think, feel and behave as a society. We are born into a culture and through socialization processes we learn about our culture which ultimately represents our reality and our world view (Chinoy & Hewitt, 1975; Cruz-Janzen, 2000; Gollnick & Chinn 2002). Although it is extremely important that children learn about their culture, it is also important for them to learn that not everyone is the same. This is especially important for children who live in a community that is not racially, ethnically, or culturally diverse.

Many question how this can be done when many teachers seem unwilling to integrate multicultural education in the early childhood curriculum. Many teachers, it appears, find cultural differences awkward, and they are uncomfortable discussing it (Cannella & Reiff, 1994; Ukpokodu,

1999; Manning, 2000). This is especially true for teachers who are monocultural. It is difficult for them to understand that multicultural education is really just about the lives of children and their families within and outside their classrooms. Too often teachers with monocultural classrooms, for example, still maintain that they do not need to include multicultural education in their classrooms. These teachers do not see the importance of having students learn about groups that are not immediately visible in their classroom or the community.

Young children enjoy learning about different people and each other. An integrated program that includes multicultural activities and materials will help young children understand that their world is larger than their community (Salmon & Akaran, 2001). In a classroom that is heterogeneous, children have the opportunity to experience, first hand, people who are different from themselves. However, it is different in a homogeneous classroom. In this type of classroom the teacher has to make a determined effort to help children understand differences as they relate to them and the people with whom they may come in contact.

Multicultural education is ideal in helping young children understand the lives of people who may look, dress, speak, think or eat differently from the way they do. Therefore, whether a classroom is monocultural or not, it is imperative that teachers provide multicultural materials and activities and allow students to be active participants in these activities. This helps to prepare young children to meet the diversity that is inevitable (Midobuche, 1999; Manning, 2000; Salmon & Akaran, 2001).

Why Multicultural Education in Kindergarten

In a Position Paper from the Association for Childhood Education International, Moyer (2001) provided a list of several program implementation strategies for "an effective, individually and culturally developmentally appropriate kindergarten program." Among the items cited is the fact that an effective program "provides many opportunities for the use of multicultural and non-sexist experiences, materials and equipment that enhances children's acceptance of self and others."

According to Cannella and Reiff (1994), how we respond to diversity is probably one of the most important issues in education today. The world is fast becoming a "global village" and so it has become extremely important that respect for and understanding of differences be inculcated in children at an early age. Therefore, teachers need to use every opportunity to help eliminate stereotype and prejudice by exposing children to ethnic and cultural differences within and outside the culture of the classroom.

Purpose of Study

According to the 2000 Census, Florida is now the fastest growing state with a population during the 1990s of over 15.9 million. The state is also quite diverse racially. Hispanics, who make up 16.8% of the population now outnumber Blacks at 14.6%. Whites are at 78%. In the 1990s, Hispanics accounted for 49.2% of the population in Dade county.

Children notice differences before they see similarities (Darman-Sparks, 2000; Seefeldt, 2001). Therefore, in order to assist children in understanding difference, it is important that schools reflect the diversity that exists in the community, state and country. Beginning with kindergarten, children should become aware of the fact that the world is made up of different types of people and people whose color and background may be different from theirs. They will then, hopefully, begin to see people who are different not as unique but just different. Also, they should begin to understand that being different racially, ethnically, or culturally is not a deficit.

With the diversity that exists in Florida, this study was developed to assess kindergarten teachers' implementation of multicultural education in classrooms in the state. The study is an attempt to find out the ways in which teachers are preparing young children to become aware and ultimately feel comfortable enough to interact with people who may not look, dress or speak the way they do.

Methodology

According to the literature, there are many teachers who do not include multicultural education in the early childhood classroom and, when they do, it is generally presented in an isolated fashion. Also, aspects of the early childhood curriculum, for various reasons, fail to present a true picture of the cultural structure in the communities in which schools are located. This study, which consists of a sample of 477 kindergarten teachers from 54 of 67 counties in the State of Florida, was developed to assess the level of inclusion of multicultural materials and activities in kindergarten classrooms in the state.

Sample

Using a list of kindergarten teachers supplied by the Department of Education in the State of Florida, 1000 kindergarten teachers from different schools were selected by systematic sampling (Borg & Gall, 1983). The researcher selected every sixth name from the list. This was to ensure that classrooms would be represented from the sixty-seven counties in Florida. Each teacher was asked to respond to items on a questionnaire.

Instrumentation

The researcher developed a two-part questionnaire for the study. Part I of the questionnaire, which contained 78 items, was utilized to collect information concerning the background of the teachers participating in the study, the students in their classrooms and the structure of the classrooms. Part II of the questionnaire was developed to assess the level of multicultural materials and activities teachers include in the following areas: Physical Environment; Beliefs About Curriculum; Instructional Strategies and Materials and curriculum areas such as: Music and Movement; Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Art and Social Studies. There were 43 items in this section. The teachers were asked to select the items in Part II that most appropriately described their classroom and to rank these items according to their level of inclusion as follows: Level I—Most of the time (more than 80%); Level II—Occasionally (between 40% and 80% of the time); and Level III—Seldom (less than 40% of the time) .

Procedure

A copy of the questionnaire and a letter explaining the study were sent to each of the 1000 teachers selected. They were asked to respond to all the items on the questionnaire. A follow-up letter and another copy of the questionnaire were sent to non-respondents in an attempt to elicit more returned questionnaires.

Results/Discussion

Of the 1000 questionnaires mailed 548 were returned. However 71 of these responses were excluded because the teachers were no longer teaching kindergarten. This left a final response total of 477 (47.7%). These responses were from 54 of Florida's 67 counties.

To determine how multicultural education is implemented in kindergarten classrooms, the researcher examined responses in the following areas: Physical Environment; Beliefs About Curriculum; Instructional Strategies and Curriculum content areas. For the purpose of this study, only Level I responses—Most of the Time (More than 80%)—were analyzed. Table 1 shows the counties in Florida and the number of respondents from each county.

Racial-Ethnic Background of Students

There was a wide range in the racial/ethnic background of students from the classrooms of teachers who participated in the study (refer to Table 2). The largest group of students (54.56%) are White followed by Black/African American (25.69%) and then Hispanic/Latino (15.30%). The smallest group was Asians (1.22%). Three hundred and twenty-three (2.93%) were identified as "other."

Structure of the Classroom

The environment of the classroom should reflect "children individually and as a group, as well as the teacher" (Moyer, 2000). The environment should also reflect different racial/ethnic

Table 1
Counties with the Number of Kindergarten Teachers who Participated in the Study

Alachua	11	Gadsen	1	Leon	7	Polk	18
Baker	1	Gilchrist	1	Levy	3	Port Charlotte	3
Bay	7	Glades	1	Liberty	0	Putnam	2
Bradford	0	Gulf	1	Madison	0	St. Johns	4
Brevard	0	Hamilton	0	Manatee	11	St. Lucie	7
Broward	43	Hardee	3	Marion	9	Santa Rosa	15
Calhoun	0	Hendry	2	Martin	5	Sarasota	10
Citrus	2	Hernando	7	Miami-Dade	56	Seminole	11
Clay	10	Highlands	1	Monroe	3	Sumter	2
Collier	6	Hillsborough	39	Nassau	2	Suwanee	0
Columbia	2	Holmes	1	Okaloosa	5	Taylor	1
DeSoto	0	Indian River	3	Okeechobee	2	Union	0
Dixie	1	Jackson	2	Orange	29	Volusia	9
Duval	34	Jefferson	1	Osceola	2	Wakula	1
Escambia	0	Lafayette	0	Palm Beach	22	Walton	3
Flagler	1	Lake	4	Pasco	4	Washington	0
Franklin	0	Lee	14	Pinellas	32		

Table 2
Racial/Ethnic Background of Students in the Classrooms of Responding Teachers

Racial/Ethnic Group	No. of Students	% of Students
Native American	22	0.20
Hispanic	1,686	15.30
Asian	134	1.22
White	6,010	54.56
Black/African American	2,841	25.79
Other	323	2.93
Total	**11,016**	**100.00**

and cultural groups. The physical environment of the classroom should also be designed in a way that will ensure that children will be successful in their learning experiences. There should be a variety of instructional strategies which should include individual, small groups as well as large groups. There should also be learning and activity centers based upon the interest, ability and needs of the kindergartners (Moyer, 2000).

To get an overview on how teachers structured their classrooms, the participants in this study were asked how their classrooms were arranged and how themes were selected. Of the 477 respondents, 336 (70.4%) indicated that their classrooms were arranged in centers. Four hundred and thirteen (86.58%) had children working in small groups in centers while 240 (50.31%) had children working in small groups in centers most

of the time. One hundred (20.96%) indicated that instruction was with whole groups most of the times while 35 respondents (7.33%) had children working at individual desks and 307 respondents (64.36%) had children work at assigned seats at tables (see Table 3).

Themes

Three hundred and thirty-five of the teachers (70.23%) indicated that activities in their classrooms were based on themes. Of these 47.79% of the teachers indicated that they selected the themes using observed interest of the children while 16.14% indicated that selection of themes was child-initiated. Four hundred and twenty-five teachers (89.09%) indicated that theme-based instruction included activities initiated by the teacher as well as by the students (see Table 4).

Use of Bulletin Boards

The physical environment of the classroom is very important. It reflects the philosophy of the teacher and may also indicate how information is being disseminated in the classroom. Bulletin boards, for example, can be used for either teaching or learning. They can be used to convey information to parents, display students' work or other pertinent information, or they can be used to reinforce a lesson through interaction. The lifestyles of different groups can also be reflected through the use of bulletin boards.

Of the four hundred and seventy seven teachers who responded, 26.41% used their bulletin boards to depict different cultures, 35.84% to depict different races and 17.19% for persons with special needs. Refer to Table 5 for a breakdown of responses.

Table 3
Structure of Kindergarten Classrooms

Item	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Classroom arranged in learning centers	336	70.4
Children work in small groups in centers	413	86.58
Children work individually in centers	240	50.31
All instruction takes place in whole group	100	20.96
Children work at individual desks	35	7.33
Children work at assigned seats at tables	307	64.36

Table 4
Selection of Themes in the Classroom

Item	No. of Respondents	% of 477 Respondents
Teacher selected	335	70.23
Teacher using observed interest of children	228	47.79
Child initiated selection	77	16.14

Table 5
Use of Bulletin Boards

Items	No. of Respondents	% of 477 Respondents
Depict other cultures	126	26.41
Depict other races	171	35.84
Depict people with special needs	82	17.19

Language Arts

The idea of teaching young children a second language has been debated in the United States for a long time. Also debated is the "English Only" policy which suggests that students for whom English is not their first language be denied the comfort and right of maintaining their native language while learning English. Crawford (1999), questions whether a nation should limit "its horizon to a single language" when, globally, there are so many advantages to bilingual and even multilingual ability. There is no detriment to children learning a second language when the first language is fully in place. As a matter of fact, there are more advantages than disadvantages, even when the first language is not fully developed (Chisholm, 1994; Crawford, 1999; Midobuche, 1999; Rowan, 2001).

There are numerous language arts activities that facilitate support for children who are non-native speakers of English. These activities can also help native speakers of English. They learn that English is not the only language and, as they learn a second language, they become aware of the struggles people go through to learn language.

Because language arts is such an important part of the early childhood curriculum, there were several items in this area. The items were arranged in three clusters. The first related to books in the library corner, which depicted different cultures and ethnic groups. The second cluster related to experiences with other languages through books, poetry and speaking and the third cluster included items related to teaching strategies.

With regard to whether there is a library corner in their classroom 88.46% of the respondents indicated that there was a library corner in their classroom most of the time. Seventy-four percent of respondents indicated they had books about other cultures in the library. Over seventy two percent (72.74%) indicated there are books about different ethnic groups while 23.48% had books in other languages. Table 6 provides a breakdown of the responses.

Math

According to Geist (2001), as early as the first few months of life many children are able to begin to construct foundations for mathematical concepts. However, in order to assist them in developing this ability, it is important to have a stimulating environment. Some concepts that will assist children in the formal learning of mathematics include sequencing, ordering, seriation and classification (Wortham, 1998; Charlesworth & Lind, 1999; Geist, 2001; Seo, 2003; Whitin & Whitin, 2003). Many believe that these concepts should not be taught directly but that opportunities should be provided to assist children in the assimilation of these concepts (Geist, 2001, Seo, 2003, Cutler, Gilkerson, Parrott & Bowne, 2003). It has also been suggested that teachers should use math whenever possible such as counting a variety of items on various occasions as well as having children order and classify objects. This can be done across all content areas. Children can, for example, count story characters or group them according to size or characteristics. Many of these concepts can also cross cultures. As children count, order, seriate and classify, an application can be made to stories that involve different ethnic groups and cultures.

Table 6
Language Arts

Items	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Library Corner		
Library Corner in Room	422	88.46
Library has books about other cultures	353	74.0
Library has books about different ethnic groups	347	72.74
Experiences with other Languages		
Books in other languages are in your classroom	112	23.48
Opportunity provided to experience poetry from other cultures	112	23.48
Students allowed to use native language	224	46.96
Ethnic students taught in dominant language	111	23.27
Teaching Strategies		
Students informally introduced to other languages	168	35.22
Non-native speakers of English invited to speak/read to students	119	24.94
Children encouraged to write in primary language	150	31.44
Children encouraged to use invented spelling	396	83.01

In the study, over forty percent (40.88%) of respondents indicated that they informally introduce counting in other languages. For teaching mathematical concepts 22.22% indicated that they used materials and objects depicting different ethnic or cultural groups. However, less than twenty percent (17.19%) indicated that they exposed students to different currencies (Pesos, Rupees, Sterling, etc.).

Science

Young children are naturally curious. As a result, they are more inherently scientists because they are constantly exploring, trying out new things and looking for cause and effect (Church, 1998; Alexander, 2000; Jones & Courtney, 2002). As children observe and try new ways of doing things, they are developing creative thinking skills. Although many of these skills are culture defined, creative thinking in children goes across all cultures. As children explore, sort, classify and compare they are exposed to similarities and differences (Church, 1998; Hinnant, 1999). Teachers can capitalize on these skills by using them to help young children develop cultural understanding.

At Level I (most of the time), 55.34% of respondents indicated that they had a science center in their classroom. However, only 36.05% indicated that they had books on plants and animals from other countries and 25.36% indicated that students had the opportunity to observe the growth of plants from other regions. In response to whether their students had been given the opportunity to taste fruits from other regions 30.18% indicated they had. With regard to cooking foods eaten by other ethnic groups, however, only 31.44% of teachers indicated they had provided this experience most of the time. Refer to Table 7 for a breakdown of responses at Level I.

Table 7
Inclusion of Science Activities (Level I)

Item	No. of Respondents	% of 477 Respondents
Science center in the room	264	55.34
Books about other plants & animals from other countries in center	172	36.05
Opportunity provided to observe growth of plants from other regions	121	25.36
Students have opportunity to taste foods from other regions	144	30.18
Students cooked foods eaten by ethnic groups	150	31.44

Social Studies

Children entering school do not have much understanding of themselves or the environment (Wortham, 1998; Derman-Sparks, 2000, Seefeldt, 2001). Young children are inherently egocentric and ethnocentric. Social studies in the early childhood curriculum should, therefore, attempt to help children learn about themselves and their world as well as their relationship to this world. As they share ideas, they get a better perspective of the world and how it is seen by others.

Any teacher would be remiss if the impression was given to children that the world was based solely on the values and beliefs of just one group of people. As Dewey (1938) admonished us, the classroom should be a reflection of children and their experiences. The early childhood teacher, therefore, needs to structure the classroom so that young children, through the social studies curriculum, can learn and feel good about themselves which will help them to learn and feel positive about other people.

To assist children in their understanding of the world, the teacher should provide materials and activities that will help them understand the world in a concrete way. The social studies program should include activities and materials that represent and assist children in understanding various families, occupations and ideas regarding self -awareness. The social studies program should help children become familiar with and accepting of attitudes and lifestyles that are new to them (Derman-Sparks, 2000; Seefeldt, 2001).

Dramatic Play Area

The dramatic play area is one of the most important areas for young children. It is not curriculum driven yet it can provide important information to the children and teacher. In the dramatic play area children learn how to work and play together regardless of background, practice social skills and language, and work out personal issues in a non-threatening way as they role play (Wortham, 1998; Marshall, 2001; Seefeldt, 2001). The dramatic play area provides great potential for the classroom that attempts to be multicultural. How the teacher sets the stage is extremely important. For example, the type of materials provided for dramatic play will give good insight to the teachers' commitment to exposing the children to diversity.

Three hundred and seventy seven teachers (79.03%) indicated that there was a dramatic play area in their classroom. Just over half the number of respondents (50.73%) include a variety of racial/ethnic and special needs dolls in the dramatic play area. However, less than twenty five percent of the respondents (20.54%) indicated that they include clothing representing different racial/ethnic groups in the dramatic play area, while only 11.53% of the respondents indicated having a variety of wigs in the Beauty Shop. Many respondents indicated health concerns. To the question on furniture representing different cultures in the dramatic play area only seventy one respondents 14.88% indicated that they had this type of furniture most of the time. However,

55.55% celebrated various ethnic holidays and festivals in their classrooms most of the time (see Table 8).

Holidays are important to children and they are crucial to the early childhood curriculum. Holidays are as different as they are special and they provide great possibilities for teachers to expose children to differences in culture. However, while children enjoy the festivities, teachers should ensure that the children understand the significance of different holidays and the fact that each holiday means something special (Neubert & Jones, 1998; Wortham, 1998; Derman-Sparks, 2000). It is also important for teachers to ensure that while the children celebrate the holiday it is integrated in the curriculum in a meaningful way. Children are more likely to remember the holiday and its meaning when it is connected to content areas and not presented in isolation (Neubert & Jones, 1998).

Table 8
Inclusion of Social Studies

Item	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Dramatic play area in the classroom	377	79.03
Variety racial, ethnic, special needs dolls	242	50.73
Clothing of different racial/ethnic groups	98	20.54
Variety of wigs in dramatic play area	55	11.53
Ethnic cultural furniture in dramatic play area	71	14.88
Celebrate ethnic festivals and holidays	265	55.55

Music and Movement

Children naturally love to sing and, if encouraged, will sing to themselves or in groups. It is important, therefore, to make music an integral part of the early childhood program. Teachers can use music and songs for a variety of reasons and in a variety of ways. Songs can be used to greet children, for clean up time, during circle time and whenever the teacher or children deem fit. Music activities can be structured or unstructured. Therefore, the teacher should allow the children to be creative and make up songs as well as allow open-ended music activities (Neelly, 2001; Moore, 2002; Humpal & Wolf, 2003). It is also important for the teacher to include children's favorite songs as well as songs and music from different cultures. Music can help to celebrate ethnic diversity as well as create social solidarity. Music can also help to strengthen the curriculum (Hildebrandt, 1998; Neelly, 2001). Teachers can set stories and poems to music. This will help children make connections between music, language, visual arts and other areas of the early childhood curriculum (Hildebrandt, 1998; Achilles, 1999; Neelly, 2001; Moore, 2002).

With regard to music in the curriculum, 38.78% of the respondents indicated having a music center in the classroom most of the time while 39.41% include experiences from different cultures in their music program. Less than half the number of respondents (40.25%) encourage children and parents from different ethnic groups to share their music experiences (songs, dance, musical instruments), with their students.

Art

It is important for teachers to recognize that the classroom environment, especially as it applies to art, is very important. Researchers have indicated that the classroom environment can encourage or discourage an appreciation of art (Schiller, 1995; Seefeldt, 1995). Therefore, young

children should be provided opportunities to experience a variety of art materials as well as allowed exposure to various artists and works of art. Art allows the child to develop creative expression and the environment dictates this freedom. Although there should be some structure in the environment, children should be provided with freedom to express themselves through their art (Salmon & Akaran, 2001; Szyba, 1999; Epstein, 2001).

Being able to discuss their artwork is also important. Therefore, young children should be provided with opportunities to discuss their art as well as the work of others. They also need to be provided with opportunities to visit and discuss art in museums as well as art created in the classroom. According to researchers (Schiller, 1995; Seefeldt, 1995; Epstein, 2001; Szyba, 1999), discussions of art should preferably spring from the interests of the children and preferably be initiated by them. However, artists and supporters of art should also be invited to the classroom to give the children an opportunity to ask questions and get additional information.

Table 9
Inclusion of Art

Items	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Use of Colors		
Use colors black and brown	390	81.76
Self-Identity		
Drawn life-sized outline of themselves	46	9.64
Supply of skin-tone paints in classroom	250	52.41
Respect for Children's Ideas		
Creativity is fostered in classroom	398	83.43

Children are natural artists and, as Seefeldt (1995) points out: "Teachers who are serious about children's art carefully consider their role. They understand that dialoguing with children about their art can foster children's ability to express themselves" (pg. 44).

Through the child's art work the teacher can learn a great deal about how the child sees the world. Art comes from within and children, especially those from a different culture, need to have this medium to express what they see and feel (Epstein, 2001; Salmon & Akaran, 2001; Szyba, 1999). Art also allows children to see how people from other cultures see the world and this helps them to appreciate beauty in another form (Schiller, 1995; Seefeldt, 1995; Epstein, 2001).

To determine how teachers used art in the classroom, the researcher looked at the respondents' report on use of color and self-identity through art and also respect for children's ideas. For children's opportunity to use a variety of dark colors, 81.76% indicated that they do include the colors black and brown for art activities. Few respondents (9.64%) include life-size drawings of students in the curriculum. However, over eighty percent (83.43) indicate that they foster creativity and 52.41% include a variety of skin-tone paints (including paints for children of color) in their classrooms. Table 9 shows the breakdown for responses to the items for art.

Summary

Young children learn in different ways and it is important to take this into consideration when planning the structure of the classroom. The arrangement of the room should accommodate small and large group instruction as well as facilitate a child's need to work individually. Many of the teachers indicated that they had their classrooms arranged in centers. A large percentage of teachers also indicated that they had the children working in small groups. Large and small groups help children build community. They also learn to work cooperatively with others as well as develop relationships. However, children also need to work alone as well as work one-on-one with the teacher. Working individually helps children with self-pacing while working one-to-one allows the teacher to scaffold the child's learning, as needed.

It is important that children's interest and skill level are considered when selecting themes for the curriculum. Children should also be allowed to have input in the selection of themes. If the topic is of interest to them they will stay with the task much longer. Teachers, therefore, should continually assess the interest and skill level of the children so they can plan activities accordingly. Over two-thirds of the teachers indicated that their activities were based on themes and that the theme-based instruction included activities initiated by the children. However, less than half the number of respondents (47.79%) indicated that themes were selected using observed interest of the children.

Although teachers use bulletin boards in different ways, many of the teachers did not use the bulletin board to support multicultural education. Many teachers indicated that bulletin boards were used to display children's work, themes being worked on or classroom management related displays. This indicates that, generally, the teachers did not use bulletin boards specifically for multicultural purposes.

Many teachers feel uncomfortable working with students who are culturally and linguistically different. It does not help that in the United States there seems to be a stigma attached to the use of minority language. Midobuche (1999), for example, describes the problems she faced in school because her first language is Spanish. However, research has shown that "bilingualism is correlated with greater mental flexibility..." (Crawford, 1999, pg. 4). Therefore, providing opportunities for young children to learn two languages would provide for higher level cognitive development as well as validate the fact that some people speak differently (Crawford, 1999; Chisholm, 1998, Manning, 2000).

In response to items regarding language arts, many teachers did include a library in their classroom. Many also had books about different cultures and different ethnic groups. However, less than 25% indicated that they had books in other languages in their classroom, provided opportunities for students to experience poetry from other cultures or invited non-native speakers of English to speak or read to their students. Just under 36% informally introduced students to other languages, for example, counting in Spanish. Just under 47% did allow their students to use their native language and 31.44% allowed student to write in their primary language. However, according to the data, this was mostly among Hispanic teachers with Hispanic students.

In mathematics only 40.88% informally introduced children to count in other languages. Again, this was mainly Hispanic teachers with predominantly Hispanic students. Less than 23% used materials and objects depicting ethnic groups and even less (17.19%), introduced students to different currencies.

A science program is ideal to further develop children's interest in the scientific world. Unfortunately, although over half the number of teachers indicated having a science center in the classroom, only a small percentage (36.05%) indicated having books on plants and animals from other cultures or provided opportunities to cook foods eaten by different ethnic groups (31.44%). An even smaller number (30.18%) provided opportunities to taste fruits from other regions. This is unfortunate since science, like other content areas such as social studies, language arts and art, can provide won-

derful opportunities for young children to experience multicultural education.

Although a large percentage of the respondents indicated having a dramatic play area in their classroom, only 50.73% indicated having a variety of racial/ethnic and special needs dolls in the dramatic play area. Children need to see themselves represented in the classroom and having authentic racial/ethnic and special needs dolls provide one way of exposing children to and validating children's diversity. It is interesting that although holiday celebrations tend to play a major part in schools, just a little over half the number of respondents celebrate ethnic holidays and festivals.

Typically children love to sing and since music and movement help to develop modes of learning such as listening and can also help to build vocabulary they should be encouraged. Although some teachers did include music/movement activity, less than 39% indicated having a music center in their classroom.

In art there was a high rate of response generally. However, only 9.64% of the respondents indicated having the children do life-size drawing of themselves. Art is an important medium for helping children express their feeling. Art exposes children to a variety of media and also develops creativity. Having children do self-outlines and coloring with skin-tone paints helps with self-identification and also builds self-esteem. A large number of respondents (83.43%) did indicate that they included activities that fostered creativity and over 50% include a variety of skin-tone paints.

Recommendations

Based on the analyzed data from the survey, the following recommendations are made for action in the inclusion of multicultural education in kindergarten classrooms:

- Children's diversity can form the base of the curriculum. The effective teacher should, therefore, include the lives of children and families in the planning of the curriculum. Teachers who are unsure can talk to parents and get ideas regarding family roles, values and cultural practices and integrate them into the curriculum.
- Teachers should depict different races, cultures, and people with special needs in the classroom environment. The bulletin board can be used to display pictures of people from different races, cultures, people from different ethnic groups as well as persons with disabilities. Teachers should also include in the classroom library magazines and pictures of people from diverse backgrounds.
- Multicultural books are ideal in exposing children to diversity. There should also be books in a variety of languages including dialect. Kindergarten teachers should also provide children with the opportunity to experience poetry from other cultures. Areas in the classrooms such as dramatic play need to reflect multicultural education. Teachers should include materials that reflect diverse cultures. Authentic cultural materials and artifacts should be a part of the dramatic play area.
- Teachers need an understanding of what is involved in second language learning. Chisholm (1994) suggests that pre-service teachers learn a second language so they will understand the frustration and anxieties involved. Also, to validate other languages and dialects, teachers should invite parents or members from the community, whose first language is not English, to come to the classroom to read and interact with the children.
- Teachers should be provided with pre-service and in-service training in how to adapt their curriculum material to meet the needs of diverse students. They also should be assisted in how to integrate multicultural materials and activities in the curriculum.
- Teachers should make every effort to learn about diverse cultures within and outside of their classrooms. This can be done vicariously through books, films, magazines and other resources. Teachers can also gain a lot of information by attending workshops and talking to colleagues. Community leaders and parents are also a strong resource for information.

- As teachers gain knowledge about diverse groups they will, most likely, develop a positive attitude toward diversity. Knowledge will also help teachers become aware of how perceptions and actions are culturally based and, therefore, how children and parents may act differently from the way teachers expect.
- Finally, teachers need to understand that collectivism and cooperation are an important part of some minority cultures. Therefore, although children, especially minority children, need to know how to compete, they should also be provided with opportunities to work cooperatively in the classroom.

Conclusion

The culture of the school tends to be quite different from the culture of the home, especially for minority groups and the poor. As a result, according to Dewey (Dworkin, 1959), when a child enters school he is forced to block from his mind his ideas, interests and activities. However, children have a right to expect schools to provide them with programs and experiences that equip them to deal with this pluralistic society and to "maximize their potential" for ultimately leading fulfilling lives.

The school, as a socializing agent, should be the best place for children to learn about similarities and differences with regard to race, culture and ethnicity. Curriculum content areas should ensure that children get a broad spectrum of diversity so they learn just how much people are alike even if they are different in the way they look, dress, behave and speak. As young children enter the early childhood classroom to get a view of the world as it is, their introduction to that world cannot be considered complete if the curriculum is not diverse — does not include other groups and cultures.

Schools have a moral and ethical obligation to meet the needs of all children. One of the ways that this can be done is to provide a curriculum that is diverse enough to help each child develop physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively.

The school was intended to be an extension of the home, especially in early childhood. The school would, therefore, be remiss if children were forced to divorce themselves from their own culture and heritage while having another imposed on them. It is imperative that we help children attain their fullest potential physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively, not under duress but in a way that is most conducive to their interest and background. Teachers need to help young children understand and relate to each other through appropriate activities and materials because, as they learn about themselves and others, they are more likely to respect themselves as well as members of diverse groups and will then, most likely, interact more with members in these groups.

References

Aaronsohn, E., Carter, C. J., & Howell, M. (1995). Preparing monocultural teachers for a multicultural world: Attitudes toward inner-city schools. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *28*(1), 5–9

Achilles, E. (1999). Creating music environments in early childhood programs. *Young Children*, *54*(1), 21–26.

Alexander, N. P. (2000). Making sense of science. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, 28(3), 18.

Borg, W., & Gall, M. (1983). *Educational research: An introduction* (4th ed.). New York: Longman

Boutte, G. (2000). Multiculturalism: Moral and Educational Implications. *Dimensions of Early Childhood*, *28*(3), 9–16.

Brown, S., & Kysilka, M. (1994). In search of multicultural and global education in real classrooms. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, *9*(3), 313–316.

Cannella, G., & Reiff, J. (1994). Teacher preparation for diversity. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *27*(3), 28–33.

Charlesworth, R., & Lind, K. (1999). Math and science for young children. Boston: Delmar Publishers.

Chinoy, E., & Hewitt, J. (1975). *Sociological perspective.* New York: Random House.

Chisholm, I. (1994). Preparing teachers for multicultural classrooms. *The Journal of Educational Issues of Language Minority Students*, *14*, 43-68.

Church, E. B. (1998). Seeing science everywhere. *Early Childhood Today*, *12*(8), 39–42.

Crawford, J. (1999). Heritage language in America: Tapping a hidden resource. Available at http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepage/JWCRAWFORD/HL.htm

Cruz-Janzen, M. (2000). From our readers: Preparing pre-service teacher candidates for leadership in equity. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *33*(1).

Cutler, K., Gilkerson, D., Parrott, S., & Bowne, M. T. (2003). Developing math games based on children's literature. *Young Children*, *58*(1), 22–27.

Derman-Sparks, _., & The ABC Task Force. (2000). *Anti-bias curriculum: Tools for empowering young children.* Washington, D C: NAEYC.

Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and education.* New York: Simon and Schuster.

Dworkin, M. (1959). *Dewey on education: Selections.* New York: Columbia Teachers' College.

Epstein, A. (2001). Thinking about art: Encouraging art appreciation in early children settings. *Young Children*, *56*(3), 38–43.

Gallavan, N. (1998). Why aren't teachers using effective multicultural education practices? *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *31*(2), 20–27.

Gann, C. (2001). A spot of our own: the cultural relevancy, anti-bias resource room. *Young Children*, *56*(6), 34–36.

Gaudelli, W. (2001, Summer). Reflections on multicultural education: A teacher's experience. *Multicultural Education,* 35–37.

Gay, G. (Fall 1995). Bridging multicultural theory and practice. *Multicultural Education,* 4–9.

Geist, E. (2001). Children are born mathematicians: Promoting the construction of early mathematical concepts in children under give. *Young Children*, *56*(4), 12–19.

Gollnick, D., & Chinn, P. (2002). *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society* (6th ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Havas, E., & Lucas, J. (1994). Modeling diversity in the classroom. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, *27*(3).

Hildebrandt, C. (1998). Creativity in music and early childhood. *Young Children*, *53*(6), 68–74.

Hinnant, H. A. (1999). Growing gardens and mathematicians: More books and math for young children. *Young Children*, *54*(2), 23–26.

Holsington, C. (2002). Using photographs to support children's science inquiry. *Young Children*, *57*(5), 26–32.

Humpal, M., & Wolf, J. (2003). Music in the inclusive environment. *Young Children*, *58*(2), 103–107.

Jones, J., & Courtney, R. (2002). Documenting early science learning. *Young Children*, *57*(5), 34–40.

Jones, C., Maguire, M., & Watson, B. (1996). First impressions: issues of race in school-based teacher education. *Multicultural Teaching*, *15*(1), 34–38, 43.

Klein, H. A. (1995). Urban Appalachian children in northern schools: A study in diversity. *Young Children*, *50*(3), 10–16.

Lohman, J. (2000). OLR Research Report 2000. Http://www.oga.

MacIntyre, K. (1998). When opposites attract: Using differences to make a difference. *Young Children*, *53*(5), 84.

Manning, M. L. (Winter 2000). Understanding diversity, accepting others: Realities and directions. *Educational Horizons*, 77–79.

Marlowe, B., & Page, M. (1999, Summer). Making the most of the classroom mosaic: A constructivist perspective. *Multicultural Education*, 19–21.

Marshall, H. (2001). Cultural influences on the development of self-concept: Updating our thinking. *Young Children*, *56*(6), 19–25.

Midobuche, E. (1999, April). Respect in the classroom: Reflections of a Mexican-American educator. *Educational Leadership*, 80–82.

Moore, T. (2002). If you teach children, you can sing. *Young Children*, *57*(4), 84–85.

Moriarty, R. F. (2002). Helping teachers develop as facilitators of three-to-five-year-olds science inquiry. *Young Children*, *57*(5), 20–25.

Morrison, G. (2002). *Early childhood education today, eighth edition.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Moyer, J. (2001). The child-centered kindergarten: A position paper to the Association for Child-

hood Education International. *Childhood Education*, *77*(3), 161–166.

Neelly, L. (2001). Developmentally appropriate music practice: Children learn what they live. *Young Children*, *56*(3), 32–37.

Neubert, K., & Jones, E. (1998). Creating culturally relevant holiday curriculum: A negotiation. *Young Children*, *53*(5), 14–19.

Phillips, M., & Hatch. (2000). Practicing what we preach in teacher education. *Dimensions in Early Childhood*, *28*(3), 24–30.

Romo, H. D. (1997). *Improving ethnic and racial relations in schools.* ERIC Document Reproduction Service. ED 414113

Rowan, S. (2001, May/June). Delving deeper: Teaching culture as an integral element of second language learning. *The Clearing House*, 2238–2241.

Salmon, M., & Akaran, S. E. (2001). Enrich your kindergarten program with a cross-cultural connection. *Young Children*, *56*(4), 30–32.

Schiller, M. (1995). An emergent art curriculum that fosters understanding. *Young Children*, *50*(3), 33–38.

Seefeldt, C. (1995). Art—A serious work. *Young Children*, *50*(3), 39–45.

Seefeldt, C. (2001). *Social studies for the preschool/primary child* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Seo, K. (2003). What children's play tell us about teaching mathematics. *Young Children*, *58*(1).

Spring, J. (1986). *The American school 1642–1985. Varieties of historical interpretation of the foundations and development of American education.* New York: Longman.

Szyba, C. M. (1999). Why do some teachers resist offering appropriate, open-ended art activities for young children? *Young Children*, *54*(1), 16–20.

Tabors, P. (1998). What early childhood educators need to know: Developing effective programs for linguistically and culturally diverse children and families. *Young Children*, *53*(6), 20–26.

Taylor, P. (1999). *Teacher educator's role in promoting the tenets of multicultural education.* ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 436520

Ukpokodu, N. (September 1999). Multiculturalism vs. globalism. *Social Education*, 298–300.

Whitin, P., & Whitin, J. (2003). Developing understanding along the yellow brick road. *Young Children, 58*(1), 36-40.

Wittmer, D. S., & Honig, A. S. (1994). Encouraging positive social development in young children. *Young Children*, *49*(5), 4–12.

Wortham, S. (1998). *Early childhood curriculum: Developmental bases for learning and teaching* (2nd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

Yeo, F. (Fall 1999). The barriers of diversity: Multicultural education and rural schools. *Multicultural Education*, 2–7.

Zimmerman, L. W. (2000, Winter). Bilingual education as a manifestation of an ethic of caring. *Educational Horizons*, 72–76.