

Multi-culture and Cooperative learning

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Acknowledgement

I appreciate the chance to join the New Taipei City International English Teacher's Educational Training Program. During the two weeks, we took teaching training courses at ABC Adult School, visited Stowers Elementary school, and hung out with my lovely host family. In addition, we looked around the city of Cerritos. I learned so much from the schools, the teachers, the students, my host family, and many more. Thanks to those who helped and treated us so well. I would like to share my experiences and observation to everyone. I will put emphasis on multi-culture and cooperative learning.



Multicultural Society and Multicultural Education

Since a long time ago, people around the world immigrated to the USA. The American society used to be called a *melting pot*. Or, we'd rather describe it as a *salad bowl* or *cultural mosaic*. Nowadays, the world changes rapidly. The whole world becomes a *Global Village*. In one society, people come from different countries and speak different languages. It's getting more common in many places. You may meet diversity of people in school, businesses, neighborhoods, cities, or other nations. In this ever-changing situation, we are learning how to appreciate and accept the multiculturalism.

Today, teachers in most classes will face the situation where students come from a variety of social classes and cultural or language groups. When teachers do teaching practice, they have to take this into consideration. Teachers with the *multi-culture* concept would help

students to develop a positive self-concept by providing knowledge about the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups. If we make interaction and communication between different cultures, this will provide opportunities to students to understand the cultural differences and create new ideas.

In Taiwan, we also have different races and new-comers. We put a lot of effort on “Multicultural Education.” What I saw in USA inspired me a lot about it. That is what I am going to share with you.

Banks and Banks (1995) define *multicultural education*:

"Multicultural education is a field of study and an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal education opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups. One of its important goals is to help all students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in order to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good." (p. xi)

Multi-Cultural Experiences in Cerritos

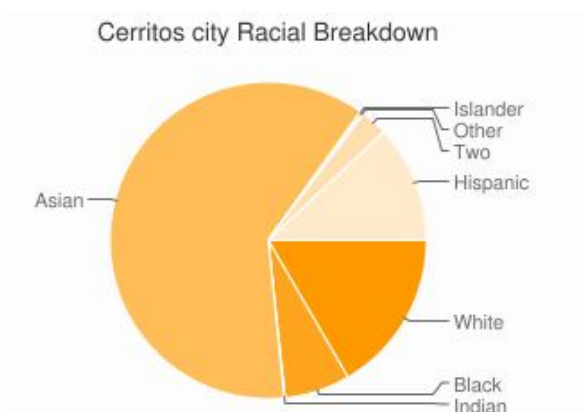
In this two-week trip, I found something interesting. We met a lot of non-white people, mostly from Asia. On the street, we saw lots of Asian restaurants around Cerritos. If you just see one of the pictures, you might think we were in Asia. But, keep walking for a few more minutes, you will see “In-N- Out” (Famous American chain fast-food restaurant in California) at the corner. This is a city with multi-culture.

- Racial population in Cerritos

You could see the chart below. That shows the population of Racial Breakdown in 2010.

From this chart, you can know that Cerritos is a city with different races, up to 61 % from Asia. One day, my roommate asked Sara (daughter of our host family), “Do you have any Asian classmates in your class?” “Yes, we do. And if you come to my school, you could see lots of Asians, we (White American) are minority there.”

Cerritos City Census 2010 Race Data



Not Hispanic

Geography	Not Hispanic							Hispanic**
	White	Black*	Indian*	Asian	Islander*	Other*	Two*	
Cerritos city	16.6	6.7	0.1	61.5	0.2	0.2	2.7	12.0
United States	63.7	12.2	0.7	4.7	0.2	0.2	1.9	16.3

- Cerritos Library

Cerritos library is an attractive place to stay. It offers comfortable space, convenient multimedia equipment and thousands of books. You can find Chinese books here, too. To my surprise, you can get books of other languages, such as Japanese, Korean, Urdu, Tamil, Gujarati, and among others. They provide an opportunity for everyone to read their own

books.



- Host Family

We usually judge one person by one's look. However, sometimes, you can't classify someone into one certain category easily and clearly. My host father is a Caucasian male and my host mother is Hispanic. They love both American food and Asian food. My host mother is good at making Mexican food. They use forks and knives, but they also try to use chopsticks. I would like to say that most of us are mixed. We have mixed thoughts, mixed tastes, and mixed cultural backgrounds. With multi-cultural experiences, we get to know each specialty of one's culture. That makes us learn from others and cherish what we have as well.



Stowers- a Magnet School of International Studies

In the second week of the program, we went to Stowers Elementary School in Cerritos. "In one class, we have students from eighteen countries who speak more than ten different languages" said the principal, Dr. Tracy. This is really international, almost like a small United Nations. That is why they join the IB (**International Baccalaureate Program**) to develop their curriculum. The following is what they want to do and what the students are expected to be.

“Stowers Elementary Magnet School of International Studies is a candidate

school in the International Baccalaureate Organization. Our mission is to develop internationally minded students who are able to interact, converse with, and understand their own, as well as other cultures, with the goal of making them lifelong learners and international citizens.”(From Stowers Elementary School Website)



The environment and settings at Stowers Elementary School

I was impressed by the environment and the settings when I stepped into the school. It is amazing that they design all the settings according to the spirit of the goal--International Studies. This is a kind of “Hidden Curriculum”. Students emerge in this environment on school days. It could affect students’ attitudes gradually in daily life.

(1) The plaza: Students have lunch, read books, or sometimes do assignments during break time here. On the top of the building, there are national flags of various countries.



(2) The school library: Walk into the library, you will see a painting on your right hand. On the wall, you can see people around the world with hand in hand in the painting. Each table has a different national flags on it.



(3) The hall and the wall: People with their own traditional clothing from every country are shown on the wall and in the hall. Moreover, they



have a map of the world, you can see where they are from.

(4) School Rules- Respect: under school rule 1, it says “Treat all staff with respect and follow



the directions immediately. In school rule, it said “Treat all students with respect”. They both mention “respect.” That’s very important in a multicultural society.

Harvest Parade at Stowers

On the 28th of October, we were invited to join the Harvest Parade at Stowers Elementary School. Usually, people wear costumes on Halloween to play trick or treat in America. But, some students from other countries don’t celebrate this holiday. At Stowers Elementary School, they decided to make it as an “International Day”. People could wear their traditional clothing or pretend to be another special character in their culture. This idea is fantastic and fun. All of us enjoyed this activity. It also gave us a chance to know more about different cultures.



Activities in Classroom

- Mini-lesson about Taiwan

We also prepared mini-lessons about Taiwan. With the pictures about Taiwan, I introduced the natural sightseeing and attractions to them. And then, I played the film of the song “The heartbeat of Taiwan.” The students were astonished at the beauty of Taiwan. They all told me that they want to visit



Taiwan someday. Besides, I taught them how to count numbers from one to ten in Chinese, Taiwanese, and Hakka. They were interested in it. This lesson indeed built good interaction between us.



- Pair work and group work

They encourage students to do pair work and group work. This will help students to communicate with others. Through discussion, they can learn the social skills.

- Buddy reading/leaning tutor

This is a cross-grade cooperative learning activity. Six-graders are the tutors to first-graders on math questions while first-graders read stories or articles to six-graders.



Cooperative Learning (Teaching Training Courses at ABC Adult School)

In the multi-cultural society, you will meet people with diverse thoughts and from different races. The most important skill is how to interact and communicate with each other. We, teachers, may have a “mixed” class with students from various cultural backgrounds or language levels. If you would like to develop their social skills and enhance their learning, you could try activities of cooperative learning. We attended the Teaching Training Courses at ABC Adult School. The trainers, Jenni Santamaria and Joanne Locnikar, provided us great ideas in cooperative learning.

- Round Robin

(1) The teacher asks a question that has a number of possible answers.

For example, “please write down something about feelings”.



(2) In small groups, students take turns answering the question. Each student writes an idea

on the paper until the teachers say “stop”.

(3) Students may discuss the list of ideas or answers with the group members or share their list with the class.



- Conversation Bag/ Basket A

(1) Give each student a number card. The student with the same number card will be the discussion group later in the activity.



(2) Every student chooses a strip of question from the bag/ basket.



(3) Ask three students with different number card. Students have to record their names and answers on the paper.

(4) Join their discussion group and report the question and the answers they wrote down.

(5) Ask their own discussion group members the questions.



- Head, shoulders, knees, and toes

(1) Teacher teaches students the song.

(2) Give each group a butcher paper. Students have to trace the outline of one person's body.



(3) Each student in the group will be assigned a role. Make sure each student has something to do.

(4) Students label the body parts learned in the song. They can write in both English and their first language.



(5) Extension Activity. Teacher gives each student an index card. On one side, Students write the vocabulary words and the part of speech, such as “hand noun”. On the other side, students draw a picture of the word and use the word to make a new sentence and write it down.

These activities above are interesting and useful. I also apply some of them in my own teaching. Students love them so much.

What I bring back to my students

After I came back to school, my students asked me a lot of questions about my trip. They are curious about what I did, where I went and what I saw during the two weeks. This is a good opportunity for me to introduce them something about the USA. I showed them the national flag given by ABC Adult School and three posters I bought in America. One of them is the map of USA. I asked my students to think the meanings of the stars of the flag. When they saw the map and the national flag, they figured out that the stars of the flag represent the states of USA. Then, I asked students to find out where California and Los Angeles are on the map.



Another poster is “Money of America.” When my students saw the coins and the bills on the poster, they asked me, “Are they real?” This also gave them a different understanding of what we use to buy things in other countries. In different countries, we may use different money. One US dollar converts to about thirty NT dollars. Before you went to USA, you have to exchange NT dollars to US dollars in cash or traveler’s check at the bank or at the airport. After the lesson finished, one of my students came to me and said, “Miss Huang, I know the man who is on the US 100 dollar-bill, but I forgot his name.” “You could tell me when you find the answer.” I said to him. The next day, the student took a piece of newspaper and went up to me. “Miss Huang, I got the answer. Look at this, this article is about Franklin.” said the boy. I think my students learned something in this lesson. I am glad to see that.



For the last lesson, I told them I want to give them a gift. That’s “respect.” Never tease someone who is different from you. If we have differences, that’s normal. Even twins have something different nonetheless. We have to keep in mind that all of us are all equal human

beings. Try to understand the differences and respect them, this is what we concerns.

After the lesson, every time when my students have quarrels or fight with other people, just think the question first, “Do you respect him/her?” My students will stop to think back and then say, “I am sorry. I didn’t respect you.” I am so happy to hear that because that means what I taught really have some influence on them. This is a gift not only for my students, but also for myself.

Reference

1. Multiculturalism Banks and Banks (1995)
2. Stowers <http://stowerelementary.org/>
3. Cerritos Library <http://menu.ci.cerritos.ca.us/>
4. Handouts of Teaching Training Courses, ABC Adult School, Cerritos, California