

Center for Educational Pluralism

2002

Winter Edition

Winter Quarter Discussion Sessions:

- March 1 @ 9am
- March 2 @ 12 pm
- March 5 6:30pm - 8:30pm
VOICES PANEL in Wilson Library Presentation Room
- March 7 @ 10am
- March 11 @ 12pm
- March 13 @ 10am
- March 19 @ 2pm

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Voices Panel – Serving Students With Special Needs

Are we hurting or are we helping students with special needs by including them in the general education classroom? How can we accommodate **ALL** students in a general education setting? What are the best methods of instruction for inclusion-practicing educators?

If you have asked yourself any of the above questions, or have wanted to either learn about or further examine issues surrounding inclusion, you should attend the CEP's

Voices Panel: *"Serving Students With Special Needs in the General Education Classroom."* We will have guest speakers from Kulshan Middle School, local professors from the TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) and Special Education De-

partments, and other educators and advocates within the Bellingham and Mt.

Vernon school districts.

Language barriers, lack of motivation, and differing perspectives are a few aspects of diversity that have limited student success in the general education classroom.

Is inclusion the best way to teach **ALL** students? Is inclusion possible or just an ideal? Find out by coming to the Voices Panel on **March 5th** from 6:30 to 8:30PM



in the Wilson Library Presentation Room. Look for advertisements or contact the CEP at (360) 650-3827 or cep@wwu.edu for more information. Refreshments provided. *Attending the Panel fulfills the discussion component of the DER.*

Native American Mentoring Program

NAMP is a student run organization that works in conjunction with the Woodring College of Education and the Center for Service Learning. Our effort is to recruit Western students to tutor Native youth in Bellingham, Lummi, and Ferndale School Districts. Tutors can work individually with a student or in a class as a T.A. We encourage everyone to volunteer and



take advantage of this great program. We ask our volunteers for minimum two-hour a week commitment. Volunteers gain experience in cultural awareness by working directly with Native youth in a school setting. Visit us in Miller Hall 350 or call for more

information: 360-650-7630.

Participation in NAMP is an option for fulfilling part of the Diversity Requirement.

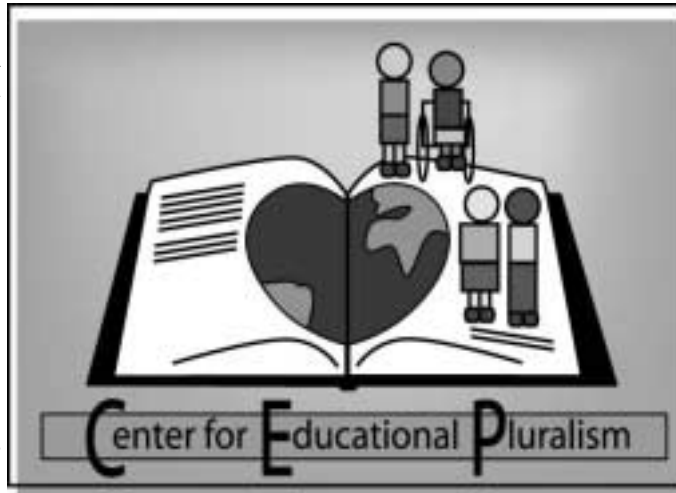
DER... Just Another Hoop?

Some Woodring College of Education (WCE) students feel that the Diversity in Education Requirement (DER) is just another hoop to jump through. Is it?

We have all heard the catch-phrase, "Our society is becoming increasingly diverse." While it is true that numbers are increasing, I will argue that it is not the fact that we are becoming more diverse, but that we are becoming more accepting of diversity.

Ideally, we would all embrace diversity, but the truth is that not everyone feels this way. However, as educators we have an obligation to each and every one of our students. Not teaching to the diverse populations that comprise our classrooms would be unprofessional. For this reason, the DER is not "just another hoop." It is probably one of the more important requirements you will fulfill in your pre-certification program.

The DER is designed to aid all WCE students in becoming effective teachers for all students. It can raise awareness of diverse perspectives and backgrounds, and provide resources that help future teachers learn about children whose backgrounds differ from their own. This



requirement can be beneficial regardless of your previous experience with diversity.

In order for this requirement to not seem like a hoop, you cannot think of it as being one. For the sake of our children—your students—put thought and effort into the DER. Whether you choose the Individual Diversity Plan, one of the classes, or the packet, you have much to gain, regardless of what kind of background you have in working with diverse populations. You will encounter new perspectives, experiences and people ... and you will not be jumping through another hoop.

Kim Alexander— former CEP Assistant Coordinator
(Reprinted from Spring 2001 newsletter)

For more information about the Diversity in Education Requirement, please stop by the CEP in Miller Hall 250. This requirement must be met by the time you apply to student teach.

Multicultural Practice or Theory?

In the midst of classroom dialogues or typical discussions, words such as "diversity" and "multiculturalism" are tossed around, but a common understanding of the terms is sometimes lacking. Multiculturalism in education is often defined via practices or singular classroom activities. When another field of study, such as history, is defined though, it is not explained by sharing a lesson on the Roaring Twenties. Rather, the theories that incorporate the study of antiquity would be the foundation for explanation.

Multicultural education is a field of study, though recently embarked upon, and it requires attention. Michelle Vander Velde Woodfork of WCE recommends a theory-based article that explores this field through organized illustrations. *Genres of Research in Multicultural Education* by Christine Bennet breaks this ambiguous topic into four categories comprising twelve genres. Bennet's clusters include:

"curriculum reform, equity pedagogy, multicultural competence, and societal equity." Using a web diagram, she maps the last decade's research in multicultural education. The map has worked as a tool in seminars for administrators, teacher educators, and classroom teachers. They not only found a common understanding, they were motivated to design their own proposals for research and practice. The article offers many insights for appreciating the history of multicultural education and what it *means*. Whether one reads Bennet's proposal, or that of another, searching for a common language in multicultural education will help one communicate and teach it.

Bennet, Christine, *Genres in Multicultural Education*, Review of Educational Research, Summer 2001, Vol. 71, No 2, pp.171-217.

Analyzing Children's Books

Picture it. You're in your first practicum experience, and your mentoring teacher has asks you to choose a book to read to the 3rd graders the following day. You run home and choose a book from your shelf that you loved as a child- it will be perfect for your class. But as you thumb through the book, analyzing the story and examining the illustrations, you notice that something is a little off. The Native American character is sitting inside a tipi, wearing a headdress. And the only female character is told that she's "not fit to do a man's work." Is this the kind of story you want to share?



Stereotypes and biases are often tucked into children's literature, and can be difficult to recognize at first glance. However, as teachers we owe it to children to present material that is free of prejudice and stereotypes. The following are some guidelines provided by *The Council on Interracial Books for Children* to help you analyze books before you teach from them.

1. Check the illustrations- Look for stereotypes and anything that demeans or ridicules characters because of race or sex.
2. Check the story line- Is 'making it' in the dominant white society projected as the only ideal? To gain acceptance, must the child of color achieve extraordinarily?
3. Look at the lifestyles- Are minority persons and their settings depicted in such a way that they con-

trast unfavorably with the unstated norm of the white middle-class suburb?

4. Weigh the relationships between people- Do the whites always possess the power, take the leadership, and make the important decisions?
5. Note the heroes- For many years only 'safe' minority heroes were depicted, those who avoided serious conflict with the white establishment.
6. Consider the effects on a child's self-image- Does the color black always have negative connotations while the color white is pure and clean and virtuous? Are the girls all 'fair' of face and slim?
7. Consider the author's or illustrator's background- Read the biographical material to assess what qualifies them to depict minority themes.
8. Check out the author's perspective- No author can be wholly objective.
9. Watch for loaded words- A word is 'loaded' when it has insulting overtones. Look for sexist language and adjectives that exclude women.
10. Look at the copyright date- Prior to the mid-1970s, most minority-experience books reflect a white point of view. Non-sexist books rarely appeared before the early- to mid-1970s.

"10 ways to Analyze Children's Books For Racism and Sexism," *The Council on Interracial Books for Children*. www.parenting-qu.com

Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years.

Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years is a 189-page revised version of the original 1991 edition. This book contains numerous articles that discuss the inaccuracies about the legend of Christopher Columbus, and offers ideas for how to teach about the true impact of Columbus's arrival in the Americas.

The book presents ideas for addressing issues beginning in elementary school up through secondary school and beyond, including perspectives about Thanksgiving, Columbus Day, racist stereotypes, environmental issues,

"Let us put our heads together and see what life we will make for our children."

-Tatanka Iotanka (Sitting Bull, Lakota)

and more. There is also a section on additional resources that deal with multiculturalism and multicultural education.

Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years is a valuable resource for

anyone's classroom or personal library. It can be purchased for \$8.00 through Rethinking Schools (www.rethinkingschools.org). It is also available at the CEP and can be checked out for a one week period.

• **Center for Educational Pluralism**

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Attention Students!

The Center for Educational Pluralism is undergoing a research project involving the Diversity in Education Requirement that Woodring requires all students to fulfill prior to student teaching. If you are in the process of doing an *Individual Diversity Plan*, or have already completed one, please stop by the CEP and fill out a questionnaire regarding your feelings and attitude toward this option for fulfilling the requirement. Your input will be greatly appreciated and helpful toward current research being done on the effectiveness of the *Individual Diversity Plan*.



Winter CEP Staff

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