Poole, John A. 2005. “Journey toward Multiculturalism”. *English Journal,* 94:3, 67-70.

Ashley McFarlan

Kennesaw State University

Abstract

When most of the literature taught in today’s classrooms are reflects a predominately white culture, often times students of different backgrounds are misplaced. There is also often times tends to be a small disconnect in what is going on in society today. Students are immersed in their own cultures and own environment and if they are subjected or introduced to different types of people it is a friend or acquaintance that they may come into contact with for a short period of time. John Poole feels that teaching multicultural literature not only allows students to come into contact with different authors and cultures but they are also introduced social issues that still exist today.

When students are trapped in their own surroundings they often times become blinded by issues that still exist. Poole was also shocked to discover that racial discrimination was taking place within his school. A student in one of his classes was a part of a hate group and refused to see anyone who was not white as “good.” These issues prompted Poole to try to incorporate multicultural literature in his classes. With a group project that he implemented he made sure that it had three essential parts.

The students were first required to read a multicultural piece of literature. Next they were required to listen to a guest speaker from other ethnic groups to shed some light on what the students have read. Finally they were to report their experiences and how they have learned from it.

The project was not going as well as Poole had hoped and many of the students were not moved by the literature that they had read. Trying to change the outcome of the project Poole decided to have students select a person from a different ethnic group to interview. This would allow students the ability to make the selection themselves on who they were interested in talking to and finally be able to talk and discuss things that they may not have been able to in class.

The change in the project was successful and students learned a lot about the people they interviewed. It also helped them to become more aware of their surroundings and the hardships that many people had faced from different backgrounds.

Application

I believe that applying the aspect of interviewing instead of listening to a guest speaker is definitely something that I would like to apply to my classroom. I think that allowing students one on one time helps them to become more comfortable and this in turn will allow them to ask the questions that they may not be willing to ask in front of a lot of other students. The reasons they would not essentially ask questions may not only be because of shyness, but they may also be worried that they are inappropriate and offensive as well. Being in a smaller environment may also allow student to see if what they are doing is in fact offensive.

A question that arises in my mind from this article is how we actually get students on board for a project like this? I feel that this is something that should not really be forced. I think it takes a special group of students, but especially a special teacher to have students really interested in getting to know more about people from a different culture. Even more so to want to interview these people and ask questions that they are really wanting to know the answers to.