Hunt, Tiffany J; Hunt, Bud. 2005.“Learning by Teaching Multicultural Literature.” *English Journal*, 94:3, 76-80.

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Abstract

Often times during undergraduate education for up and coming English teachers the topic of multicultural literature is an extremely hot topic. It is stressed in many classrooms and educators are told to implement it within their classrooms as often as possible. We are taught that it well make students of different ethnicities and cultures be more involved in lessons and more interested in what they are teaching. Students who are not of different cultures are given the opportunities to learn what other people experience as well as some of their customs and beliefs. Educators often believe that they should become more immersed in other cultures so that they are able to answer questions easily and “Know the facts.” However, Tiffany Hunt explains that many of the myths that are learned in an undergraduate course may not fully prepare you for the hardships you may face while teaching multicultural literature within a classroom.

Teachers face the struggle of trying to incorporate multicultural literature within their schedules when they are required to other pieces of literature into their curriculum as well. Although multicultural literature is not the norm, teachers also must consider that it should be considered as important as pieces that have become the norm. It is something that shouldn’t be seen as a separate entity, but should go along with what is already being taught. Hunt feels that if she had implemented three important concepts within her multicultural literature teaching she would have been more successful; however, those mistakes and bumps in the road were truly a learning experience and helped her to improve her lessons.

The first concept that she felt needed improvement was having a solid rationale. She felt that educators should not just teach multicultural literature because they have heard it was vital. One should be able to articulate the reasons why they are teaching different authors from the different ethnicities. Sometimes parents and even students will question why they are being taught and educators should be able to explain that because America is a very diverse country it is imperative that every voice is heard.

Hunt felt that she should also have solid background knowledge. Educators should be able to have some background in the culture that is being addressed Classes should be able to have a discussion on something other than the book. If the teacher has background on the culture they would be ready to facilitate these discussions.

Finally Hunt felt that doing extensive background knowledge should not take away from planning creative interactive lessons. Having a teacher who knows it all means nothing if students aren’t engaged and willing to learn more about the culture they are studying.

Although Tiffany Hunt was not able to be extremely successful her first go around her experiences have helped her to become more aware of the changes she had to make to be a positive teacher of multicultural literature.

Application

I feel that within the classroom I have not really been able to teach much multicultural literature. However, I feel as though it is very similar to explaining the differences with students with special needs to the other students. I really do need to try to teach more difference because it is evident that we are not all similar but becoming more knowledgeable as well as having a true reason as to why I am doing it would be something that I would have to brush up on.

Often times I get caught up in doing something because I am told that I have to or that it is the right thing to do, but I think that it’s important to have a clear rationale. It is important to be able to go to a parent and express exactly why I am doing the things I am doing in class and also why I am choosing to do it the way that I am.

A question I have from this article is how knowledgeable should I become in a topic that I am teaching? It should be a fairly even split in knowledge and lesson planning, but if topics come up that I am not knowledgeable about would my inability to facilitate cause students to lose interest.