Striving for the 'Perfect' Classroom *Part II*

Teachers' Responsibilities Beyond Instruction and Assessment

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Editors

Education in a Competitive and Globalizing World

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DEDICATION

Striving for the 'Perfect' Classroom Part II: Teachers' Responsibilities Beyond Instruction and Assessment is lovingly dedicated to all of our favorite teachers, especially those special people who inspired us to become educators.

In particular, we would like to honor the memory of Mr. Leon Miller, a first grade teacher who was tragically taken early in his life. Mr. Miller was an inspirational educator who made learning interesting and fun.

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Chapter 2

ENGAGING AND CHALLENGING ALL STUDENTS WITH A RIGOROUS CURRICULUM

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It was the first day of class. Alex, a new student in third grade, walks in and gives Mrs. Smith a letter. She opens the letter and reads...

Dear Teacher,

I am entrusting to your care a very special person, my child Alex Kalu-Khan. I feel compelled to tell you more about him, and our background, so that you can instruct him accordingly.

I am of French descent, a Catholic, born in Nice but raised in Kenya. My husband, Alex's father is a Muslim, who grew up in England, and later moved to Ghana. Alex is privileged in many ways, he is bi-racial, multi-ethnic, multilingual, and has learned how to appreciate and celebrate all religions. Our work with the United Nations takes us all around the world, and Alex travels with us. When he was six he sailed down the River Nile and drew a picture that now hangs in the Children's Gallery of Art in Amsterdam. He enjoyed his first year of school in China, spent two years in a one room school Papua New Guinea, and did the rest of his schooling in England. He has won many awards for his short stories and poetry.

Alex has a flair for languages. He is fluent in English, French, Urdu, and Swahili. He is very sociable and finds it easy to get along with most people. Alex's test results show that he is gifted in Literacy and Art, but he struggles with basic concepts in Mathematics. Nowhere does the test show his sense of humor, his generous spirit, and the patience and compassion he exhibits with his sister who suffers from cerebral palsy. He loves to share his thoughts. Please try not to stifle that as it shows his creative side.

Alex is not representative of any one particular race or culture or religion. I hope you will honor and value his heritage and build on his experiences. I am hoping you can provide him with a curriculum that helps him to advance not just in the academic areas, but also teaches him how to distinguish right from wrong and dispel the stereotypes that are perpetuated in our society. I hope the curriculum will enable you to nurture his natural curiosity and creativity, channelize his exuberant personality, and help him learn with and from the other children in his classroom.

Alex has as much to learn as he has to contribute. Thank you for accepting this challenge.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Kalu –Khan

"Another unique child" thought Ms. Smith, "I already have twenty-two in my class, how do I cope with yet another?"

Ms. Smith's immediate response is not unusual in today's world. Teachers in the United States have to prepare themselves to work with children like Alex. What can Mrs. Smith do with a child like Alex? How can she modify the curriculum to meet his unique needs? How can she help Alex to maximize his potential in Literacy and the Arts, and make steady gains in Mathematics and other areas of the curriculum? Can she really guarantee that the curriculum be both relevant and challenging to a child who has travelled the world and been exposed to people of many different cultures? How does she prevent language-loss from taking place when all the instruction in her classroom takes place in English? Will the Caucasian students in her classroom befriend a child who looks nothing like them? Will they even see the benefits of learning with and from him? What can she do to help promote cross-cultural awareness in *all* students? This chapter will help you reflect on and find answers to some of these questions. Specific strategies are provided to assist you in evaluating and enriching the existing curriculum so it is relevant to the needs of all students, not just students of the dominant group.

KEY CONCEPTS

1. Teachers need to prepare themselves to deal with a range of unique needs, challenges, and opportunities associated with a school population that is comprised of persons of different racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds.
2. Children, through the social curriculum provided by radio, television, newspapers, and their family attitudes, are provided with distorted messages about people who are different from themselves long before they walk into the classroom. As a result, students who are different are often perceived as genetically inferior or culturally deprived. Teachers need to help students to challenge their preconceived notions and dispel these myths.
3. The curriculum is a broad term that represents so much more than a set of standards, pacing charts, curriculum maps, curriculum guides, and textbooks. Teachers need to condense the overcrowded content driven curriculum; allow *students* to become the center of curriculum planning and development; and create room for them to experience the curriculum and influence it by engaging in exploration, collaborative inquiry, critical thinking, problem solving, and creative expression.

4. A culturally responsive teacher recognizes the need to evaluate both the formal and hidden (informal) curri determine if it does indeed portray *all* cultures positively, ar students with an opportunity to think critically, confront th and respond empathetically to issues of institutionalized classism, sexism, and abelism.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

To what extent have you evaluated the formal and hidden curri What can you do to ensure that the curriculum engages and challer students in your classroom?

THE CLASSROOM IN FLUX: A CALL FOR CREATIVI SOLUTIONS

Pre-service teachers in the U.S. receive a rigorous training. The provided a thorough curriculum that includes courses on Educat Psychology, Child Development, Pedagogy, and Classroom Managen They learn how to write objectives that align with state and national stand plan developmentally appropriate lessons and units, and assess stu progress. Many programs provide pre-service teachers with the opportunit step into K-12 classrooms and get firsthand experience; this happens as e as when they are sophomores and juniors. Additionally, pre-serv preparation programs culminate with a semester long student teachi experience. Despite all the preparation they have received beginning teache often claim that they were "caught by surprise" (personal communicatio March 14, 2010) and "feel ill equipped to deal with all the diversity in th classroom" (personal communication, April 4, 2010).

Classrooms are more diverse now than they have ever been. Immigrant from around the globe are entering the U.S. Many students, like Alex, are bi lingual, or multi-lingual. Some are proficient in English, but many have limited proficiency and are classified as English language learners (ELLs). Nearly one in ten students nationwide is an English language learner.

The classroom is changing in other ways, too. There are more students on either end of the academic spectrum, students who are gifted, as well as students with disabilities. Approximately six percent of students are identified as gifted; many of whom do not receive enrichment services (National

Association for Gifted Children, 2008). Students with disabilities (physical, academic, and/or behavior) who formerly studied in resource rooms now spend all or part of the day in a mainstream classroom. Approximately 96 percent of the teachers in the U.S have students with disabilities (Graham, Morphy, Harris, Fink-Chorezempa, Saddler, Moran et al., 2008). Students like Alex do not fit cleanly into one group or the other. They might be gifted in some areas, and challenged in others. In addition to learning how to meet the diverse academic needs of students with special needs, teachers need to learn how to manage all the paraprofessionals that follow these students into the mainstream classroom.

Perhaps, the greatest challenge is meeting the needs of students who live in poverty. Of the seventeen wealthiest nations of the world, the United States is ranked as the one with the highest child poverty rate (Mishel, Bernstein, & Allegretto, 2008). School districts span different socioeconomic sections of cities or towns. Across different socioeconomic backgrounds, students have different living conditions: some being raised by two parents, others by single parents, and others live in blended families. Students' socioeconomic background and living conditions greatly influence student success in the classroom. While it is impossible to eliminate these factors, teachers can reduce the effect they have on students by creating culturally responsive classrooms. No longer can teachers fit the student to the curriculum, they have to find a way to adapt the curriculum and their pedagogical practices to individual students.

THE CURRICULUM: WHAT IS IT AND WHOM DOES IT SERVE?

The first thought that comes to mind when educators and non-educators hear the word *curriculum* is 'textbook.' While pioneers in the field of curriculum, like John Dewey, Franklin Bobbit, W.W. Charters, Hollis Caswell, and Ralph Tyler have disagreed on many educational issues they all agree that the curriculum is a great deal more than the textbook (Schubert, 2010).

Parkay, Hass, and Anctil provide a comprehensive definition of curriculum in their book *Curriculum Leadership: Readings for Developing Quality Educational Programs*:

> The curriculum is all of the educative experiences learners have in an educational program, the purpose of which is to achieve broad goals and related specific objectives that have been developed within a framework of theory and research, past and present professional practice, and the changing needs of society (2010, p.3).

With the intent of providing improved educational outcomes and increased equity across educational systems, the *No Child left Behind* Act (2001) set into motion a change of events that has had a huge impact on the curriculum being offered in U.S. classrooms. Some positive outcomes have resulted, which include the development of state standards, the redesign of curriculum at the district level, and large scale assessment and accountability programs aimed at generating data that can be used to increase student achievement. Unintended outcomes of these well intentioned regulations include rigid teacher certification programs, heavy reliance on standardized testing, and severe consequences for schools that do not reach the goals developed by the national and state departments of education.

Over the last decade, teachers in classrooms are being required to cover a vast amount of content specified in national and state standards. At the district level, curriculum documents are created by experienced curriculum directors and committees, often with minimal involvement of teachers, administrators, and special education teachers. Teachers are expected to embrace scripted programs, canned curriculum, scope and sequence charts, mandated textbooks, and pacing guides which ensure that every class is covering the same content at the same time. In many school districts, when there is little buy in, these documents are not taken seriously. In the absence of proper training teachers end up employing their own curriculum sequence and continue to use the instructional resources that they have always used. Often the textbook, which should be just one of the many resources available to teachers, becomes the curriculum.

Standards-based accountability systems are resulting in overload and curriculum fragmentation (Roach, Niebling & Kurz, 2008). Curriculum that is a mile-wide and an inch deep coupled with an inordinate amount of instructional time spent on "test prep" often results in superficial memorization of facts and elevated stress levels for both teachers and students (Powell, Higgins, Aran, & Freed, 2009). Curricula that was once rich in art, music, speech, debate, home economics, industrial arts, history, social studies, and physical education is being replaced with a "drill and grill" curriculum that focus more on Literacy, Science, and Mathematics. Children in poorer districts

who benefited from enrichment provided in schools, have now become the victims of the very policies that were developed to serve them.

Research conducted over the last decade confirms that the students who belong to minority groups, in particular African American and Hispanic, are more likely to be identified as special needs students, and less likely to be identified as gifted (Elhoweris, Muta, Alsheikh, & Holloway, 2005); African American and Hispanic students are dropping out of school at an increasing rate (National Center for Education Statistics, 2007); and our failure to understand Asian Pan Pacific students' needs could be contributing to the fact that their self esteem is lower than that of African American and Caucasian counterparts (Pang, 2008). Would student outcomes look differently if we spent less time conforming to standards and test prep and more time evaluating and enriching the curriculum with content that is culturally relevant to the changing student demographic? Could moving from a traditional monocultural curriculum to a multicultural curriculum create a climate of teaching and learning that promotes success for *all* students irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability?

WHAT IS A MULTICULTURAL CURRICULUM?

A multicultural curriculum places *all* students at the heart of the teaching-learning process. Ford's description of a culturally responsive classroom reflects this ideal:

> ...culturally responsive classrooms are student-centered and, by default, culture-centered. A student-centered classroom cannot exist if culture is ignored or disregarded in anyway. In every classroom, culture matters (2010, p.51).

Scholars in the field of multicultural education have highlighted benefits associated with a multicultural curriculum for decades (Banks & Banks, 1993; Nieto & Bode, 2008; Tiedt & Tiedt, 2010); yet, even with the changing demographics in schools today the transition from a monocultural curriculum to a multicultural curriculum continues to be a challenge. Table 2.1 highlights the differences between a monocultural curriculum and a multicultural curriculum.

K-12 curricula in the U.S. does not fall cleanly into one or the other category outlined in Table 2.1, they could be anywhere along a continuum. Where on this continuum would you place the curriculum of your school?

Moving along this continuum towards the ideal will only be possible if teachers reflect on the climate that prevails in their schools. Table 2.2 will help you to determine if your school provides a climate that supports multicultural teaching and learning.

Table 2.1. Differences between Monocultural and Multicultural Curriculum

Monocultural Curriculum	Multicultural Curriculum
The norms and values of a single culture, generally the dominant culture, are reflected in the formal and hidden curriculum.	Multiple cultures, both the dominant culture, and the cultures of minority groups, are reflected in the formal and hidden curriculum.
Student diversity is perceived as a problem to be fixed.	Student diversity is perceived as a resource to be tapped.
The *us* versus *them* (right verses wrong) ideology and monocultural certainty prevails.	The *we-us-our* ideology and spirit of multicultural inquiry prevails.
School and classroom norms reflect the value system of the dominant group.	School and classroom norms reflect the value system of both dominant and diverse groups.
Broad labels, which do not really reflect the diversity within individual groups, are used to identify students (e.g: Asians, disabled, gay).	Students are identified as they wish to be identified and may often identify with several cultural groups.
The curriculum and pedagogy exclude the histories, traditions, and perspectives of all but the dominant groups.	The curriculum and pedagogy include the history, traditions, and perspectives of both dominant and diverse groups.
Only the beautiful and heroic aspects of history are taught.	The beautiful and heroic aspects as well as the ugly and exclusionary aspects are taught.
Teachers and students are unwilling to talk about the power structures that prevail in the world, society, and school.	Identifying and talking about the power structures that prevail in the world, society, and school are common practice.
Multiculturalism is addressed as an add-on, using the tour-detour approach.	Multiculturalism is embedded into the fabric and pervades all aspects of the school system.

Table 2.2. Checklist for Evaluating Climate for Multicultural Teaching and Learning

Assign yourself a point for every question that you answer "YES."

____ Does the formal, mandated curriculum contain content that represents the cultural heritage of both the dominant group as well as groups that are diverse in terms of culture, race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, ability, sexual orientation?

____ Are the contributions of diverse groups represented favorably in the books students read, the movies they watch, the activities in which they participate?

____ Do students get an opportunity to read books written by authors of different backgrounds (culture, race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, ability, sexual orientation) on a regular basis?

____ Are culturally relevant, meaningful content, resources, and materials evenly spaced throughout the year, in every subject, instead of in just a single unit, week, or month?

____ Does the curriculum allow you to build bridges of relevance between home, community, and school experiences on an ongoing basis?

____ Do you encourage students to be critical of what they read, see, and hear in textbooks, mass media, and from their parents and friends?

____ Do you provide students with an opportunity to reflect on their own stereotypes and prejudices?

____ Do you provide students with an opportunity to critically examine the power structures, class structures, and inequalities that exist in society, the school, and the classroom?

____ Are the perspectives of both the dominant groups and diverse groups examined in discussions of historical or current events?

____ Do you provide students with an opportunity to develop their critical thinking and problem solving skills on an ongoing basis?

____ Do you have high expectations for all students irrespective of culture, race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, ability and sexual orientation?

____ Do you ensure that students have an opportunity to work on assignments and activities with students of different backgrounds?

____ Do students with special needs have an opportunity to work in large and small group activities with typical students in the classroom several times a day?

____ Do you distribute questions evenly in the classroom and use examples that connect with the experience students have in the real world?

Score of 11-14: Collaborate with colleagues and identify ways to address gaps.
Score of 6-10: Building wide intervention needed. Seek your principal's help in initiating major curriculum renewal.
Score of 1-5: Curriculum Alert! Need for district-wide and building wide discussion, intervention, and support.

Teachers who wish to move one step closer to creating a climate that supports multicultural teaching and learning can start by integrating multicultural content into the curriculum they offer their students. Banks and Banks (1993) has described a variety of ways in which this can be done:

1. The Contributions Approach (there is a superficial focus on food, festivals, heroes, holidays, etc);
2. The Additive Approach (content, concepts, themes, and perspectives are added to the curriculum but do not fundamentally change the structure of the curriculum);
3. The Transformation Approach (the Eurocentric nature of the curriculum is changed, concepts, issues, events, and themes are explored from the perspective of diverse ethnic and cultural groups);
4. The Social Action Approach (students are engaged in decision making and social action to achieve multicultural goals, a vibrant democracy, and constructive social change).

The Contributions Approach and the Additive Approach are more prevalent in schools in the U.S. You can learn more about multicultural curriculum reform by visiting the Critical Multicultural Pavalion online at: http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/curriculum.html.

ENACTING A CURRICULUM THAT ENGAGES AND CHALLENGES ALL STUDENTS: ACTION PLAN

It is not easy to create and implement a curriculum that is rigorous, engaging, and challenging for all children. These steps can assist you with evaluating the formal and hidden curricula, and responding to the needs of all learners.

Step 1: Evaluating the Formal Curriculum

How rigorous is our curriculum? Are we meeting the needs of all students? Are we producing students with sufficient content knowledge? Can

they apply this content knowledge to real-world problems? Do they have the knowledge and skills necessary to compete nationally and internationally with people who are different from them? Some of these questions can be answered by studying international and national assessment reports.

The *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study* (TIMSS) reports on the performance of U.S. students relative to their peers in 58 other countries, and on changes in mathematics and science achievement by sex, race/ethnicity, and enrollment in schools with different levels of poverty. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), a world-wide evaluation coordinated by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) with a view to improving educational policies and outcomes evaluates the scholastic performance of 15-year-old school children once every three years. While TIMSS measures more traditional classroom content such as an understanding of fractions and decimals and the relationship between them (curriculum attainment), PISA measures education's application to real-life problems and life-long learning (workforce knowledge). A home grown version of this international assessment is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) conducted in the United States by the National Center for Education Statistics, a division of the U.S Department of Education. The NAEP covers areas of mathematics, reading, writing, and science.

Analysis of international (TIMSS, PISA), national (NAEP), and state assessments reveal that students in the U.S score poorly on items requiring higher-order thinking and the ability to transfer learning to a new context. It appears that the focus is on breadth rather than depth (Roach et al., 2008). Careful evaluation of both the formal curriculum and hidden (informal) curriculum will help us to identify existing gaps, not just in content but also with regard to the ways in which the curriculum is planned, developed, and enacted.

The formal curriculum is often a written document that is provided to teachers at the start of the school year. Some districts provide teachers with a curriculum that is created at the district level and aligns with state standards and assessment anchors. These documents are often bulky and list learning objectives and related classroom activities. Some districts create syllabi, scope and sequence charts, curriculum maps, course outlines, and/or pacing charts. While teachers are required to use these documents as a basis for planning

lesson, more often than not, they are not involved in the development of the curricular material.

Curriculum maps help us to answer the question: Where do we teach what? They generally include: a description of content; a description of processes and skills; and a description of the work students produce for assessment of learning. These documents enable teachers to get a clear sense of the content being covered, and the standards that should be met at each grade level. They help to minimize gaps and eliminate redundancy. Vertical and horizontal curriculum maps bridge the "Grand Canyons in communication" (Jacobs, 1997, p.61) by providing teachers with efficient access to data of students' actual learning experiences. These maps enable teachers to build on the work that students have done previously, and prepare them for the next grade level. Ideally these maps should capture what *is* happening rather than what *ought* to happen, but this seldom occurs. Curriculum maps are often created at the district level to promote uniformity. Given that *uniformity* is the objective, building principals seldom encourage teachers to edit, review, and modify these maps. What is intended to be a dynamic document often ends up being a static one that is changed only when and if the curriculum is modified.

Teachers in middle and high schools assume the textbook is the curriculum (Wiggins & McTighe, 2006); they draw heavily on the teacher manual to enact the curriculum. State standards are very explicit, and clearly articulate the importance of meeting the needs of all students, including students of diverse groups. Teachers often assume that because the curriculum "aligns" with the standards they will inevitably meet the needs of all students. It is important that teachers make no assumptions about the curriculum. A careful evaluation of the formal curriculum using the checklist in Table 2.3 will allow teachers to identify gaps that they can fill as they prepare for instruction.

Table 2.3 Checklist for Evaluating the Formal Curriculum of a K-12 School

Assign yourself a point for every question that you answer "YES."

____ Do you have access to documents (k-12 vertical and horizontal curriculum maps) which give you a general overview of the content and skills students ought to have at the start and end of the school year?

____ Are your curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments clearly aligned with content standards?

____ Do you personally evaluate the prescribed textbook against state or district content standards to determine the degree of alignment?

____ Do teachers in your school use the textbook as a reference book rather than the curriculum?

____ Do you have built-in flexibility to modify curriculum offerings based on student performance and understanding?

____ Do you engage in collaborative lesson planning at least once a week with teachers and the paraprofessionals of students with special needs?

____ Are adaptations and modifications to the curriculum made to meet the needs of ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse learners on an ongoing basis?

____ Do you have a document, other than your lesson plans, that allows you to keep track of what actually happens in the areas of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, during the course of the school year?

____ Do you use formative and summative teacher-made tests on an ongoing basis to assess student learning rather than relying solely on standardized tests like 4sight?

____ Are these teacher-made tests aligned with content standards and assessment outcomes?

____ Do you make use of rubrics and scoring systems rather than arbitrary grades to provide feedback to students?

____ Is technology being incorporated appropriately to enhance, not replace, the curriculum?

____ Do you have the opportunity to collaborate with teachers of your grade level and engage in horizontal curriculum mapping several times each semester?

____ Do you have the opportunity to collaborate with teachers of other class levels and engage in vertical curriculum mapping at least once or twice a year so that the students' transition from one grade level to the next is well orchestrated?

Score of 11-14: Collaborate with colleagues and identify ways to address gaps.
Score of 6-10: Building wide intervention needed. Seek your principal's help in initiating curriculum renewal.
Score of 1-5: Curriculum Alert! Need for district wide discussion, intervention, and support.

Step 2: Evaluating Hidden Curriculum

Of all the aspects of schooling that remain unexamined and unchallenged by school officials, the hidden curriculum is probably the most powerful. The hidden curriculum is considered to be the curriculum outside the formal curriculum. It includes unintended and unrecognized values, attitudes, beliefs, and communication styles of individuals in schools, which directly and indirectly affect the academic outcomes of students in school. Powerful messages about issues of gender, class and race, and authority are conveyed to students through the hidden curriculum. They learn what is, and is not, "appropriate" behavior, who can and cannot make decisions, and who can and cannot succeed. The hidden curriculum often has a deeper impact than the formal curriculum (Posner, 2004).

One can tell the priorities of a school without even looking at the formal curriculum. A casual glance at the schedule of most K-12 schools today will reveal that reading and mathematics is a priority. Not only is it scheduled more frequently than other studies, but it is scheduled earlier in the day. The importance given to standardized tests is evident from the number of worksheets students have to attempt in a given week, the standards aligned textbooks that are becoming increasingly popular, and the inordinate amount of time devoted to 'test prep' in a given school year.

The seating arrangement in the classroom and the material displayed on the bulletin boards often reflects the pedagogical preference of the teacher. If the furniture in the room is arranged in neat rows, all facing the teacher's desk, and the material on the bulletin board is comprised of store bought charts and posters, it is more likely that the teacher favors a teacher-centered approach to instruction. On the other hand, if the furniture in the room is arranged in groups, or a "u" shaped configuration, and the boards are covered with students' drawings, stories, and posters, the teacher more likely than not favors a student-centered approach to instruction.

The hidden curriculum is not always congruent with the stated mission or vision of the school. The terms 'equity,' 'success for all,' and 'global citizens' is often touted in school vision and mission statements, but these ideals are not always enacted in public school classrooms and corridors. Use Table 2.4 to evaluate the hidden curriculum in your school. A clear sense of where the gaps lie will enable you to identify resources and opportunities that can be harnessed to bridge these gaps.

Table 2.4. Checklist for Evaluating the Hidden Curriculum of a K-12 School

Assign yourself a point for every question that you answer "YES."

_____ Does the administrative and teaching faculty include people from diverse backgrounds (culture, race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, ability, sexual orientation)?

_____ Are all groups (academics, sports, music, etc.) equally valued in the school and community?

_____ Are academics celebrated more frequently than athletics?

_____ Do the bulletin boards, displays, trophy cases, resource books, and films shown in your school building and classroom represent all the diverse groups represented in society?

_____ Do the bulletin boards, displays, trophy cases, resource books, and films shown in your school building challenge existing stereotypes?

_____ Are all students provided equal access to textbooks, school activities, extracurricular activities, technology, computer software, special programs, advanced placement, afterschool service?

_____ Do uniform grading policies exist?

_____ Is there a wide range of books in both the class library and school library that represent people of different backgrounds? Additionally, does the library also contain books written by people of diverse backgrounds? Do these books find their way into the classroom?

_____ Is the furniture in the classroom arranged in a configuration that will enable students to engage in dialogue and work in heterogeneous groups that include students who are gifted and students with special needs?

_____ Are conversations about cultural diversity a part of everyday discourse throughout the year, rather than at particular times of the year like Thanksgiving, Hanukah, and Black History Month?

_____ Do the students have an opportunity to interact with and learn about diverse people's culture and traditions as a normal part of their lives, rather than experience them as "exotic" people who are different from themselves?

_____ Does the lunch program offer students a cuisine that can be appreciated by a wide range of ethnic groups?

_____ Do all students feel a sense of belonging and appreciation and support?

_____ Are all students encouraged and expected to work collaboratively within and outside the classroom?

Score of 11-14: Collaborate with colleagues and identify ways to address gaps.
Score of 6-10; Building-wide intervention needed. Seek your principal's help in initiating curriculum renewal.
Score of 1-5: Curriculum Alert! Need for district wide discussion, intervention, and support.

Step 3: Bridging Identified Curricular Gaps and Responding to the Needs of Diverse Students in the Classroom

The demands of high stakes testing and the ever expanding curriculum have made it difficult for principals and teachers to think of anything other than covering the breadth of materials and raising the average test scores. The intent is not to ask teachers to do more, but to reflect more fully on the gaps that exist in the formal and hidden curriculum and the short term and long term impact that it might be having on students. Teachers like Mrs. Smith can meet the needs of all students, including diverse students like Alex, by making small changes in the way they develop and enact the curriculum on a day to day basis.

1. Making Students Central to the Curriculum Enacting Process

School district personnel often lose sight of the fact that the experiences that students have and their individual needs should take center stage during curriculum development and enactment. Figure 1 illustrates how curriculum, instruction, and assessment should revolve around the students, and not the standards.

Figure 2.1. The Multicultural Classroom.

The standards are a means to an end, and not an end in itself. The broken lines that make up the triangle in Figure 1 illustrate that the classrooms should

be an open system; the curriculum development, instruction, and assessment that takes place within the classroom should be continuous, flexible, and dynamic. All students, irrespective of culture, race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, ability, or sexual orientation, should be active participants in influencing the curricular content and process, instruction, and assessment. The teacher should not rely solely on 4sight data or the results of standardized tests to make changes to curriculum, instruction, and assessment procedures. The process of curriculum modification and development should be ongoing and intuitive.

Anecdotal evidence reveals that teachers are provided with insufficient training on how to use curriculum maps, curriculum guides, scope and sequence charts, and pacing guides. Teachers often find these bulky documents daunting.

> Knowing that school districts have officially adopted the material, I feel responsible for investigating every single topic, teaching every single lesson, using every single reproducible, and assigning every single homework set. I know this is impossible, but I feel like I have to do this (Kobelin, 2009, p.12).

Teachers need to work smarter, rather than harder. Paring down the curriculum and drawing on the best that each curriculum document has to offer will allow the teacher to create more time for students to engage in exploration, collaborative inquiry, critical thinking, problem solving, and creative expression. Teachers can accomplish this by creating an Abbreviated Curriculum Guide (ACG). Unlike the curriculum map which lists the content that each grade will cover over a period of several years, the user friendly ACG (see Table 2.5) is subject and grade specific. The Dewey Decimal System, which is used in libraries worldwide, and organizes books on library shelves in a specific and repeatable order, is a good metaphor for the ACG. An ACG will enable the teacher to reduce bulky documents (state standards, the curriculum frameworks, curriculum maps, pacing guides, textbooks, and textbook manuals) to a 2-4 page user friendly document. The ACG makes it possible for a teacher to ensure that the curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices come together, in a given subject area, for a particular grade level for the entire school year.

Table 2.5 Example of an Abbreviated Curriculum Guide – Math: Grade 3

Content/ Concept	Objec tives/ Skills	Standards	Resources/ Materials/ Technology (list page numbers from curriculum, textbook, video and book titles, software, urls, etc.)	Instructional method (list specific strategies /plan for differen-tiation)	Recommended Time range in days/weeks	Related Assessment/ Evaluation/ Tests	Comments/ Reflections (should be completed after instruction)

Teachers should begin by listing the concept/ content to be covered in the first column. They should then list objectives or essential questions in the next column. The related standards should be listed in the third column. In the fourth column, teachers should list all the resources that they will draw on to teach the content/concepts. This column will include page numbers from the textbook, web site urls, titles of books, videos, etc. Integrating multicultural content into the curriculum should be done at this stage, rather than later as an afterthought.

The field of multicultural education is ever changing. It is therefore important that teachers look beyond the textbook for interesting multicultural literature and activities that can be used to promote critical thinking in students. Learn more about ways in which you can enrich your curriculum with culturally relevant content and pedagogy by visiting the websites described in Table 2.6.

In column five teachers should list strategies they will use to motivate and engage students. This could include demonstrations, lectures, simulations, discussion groups, projects, etc. Teachers need to vary the type of instructional methods they use over the course of the year. Column six should be used to record recommended time range for teaching the identified content/concepts. All classes and individual students do not have to complete the content at the same time. Teachers who teach several sections of the same class can keep track of the changes they are making for each class. Column seven should be used to record the assessment procedure. The assessments should include teacher made tests as well as standardized test prep; both should be closely aligned to the standards. Reflective comments, which should be written in

column eight, will help teachers to document changes that they have made along the way, both to curriculum and instruction.

The ACGs, which are great substitutes for pacing guides with a 'one size fits all' orientation, have multiple benefits. They give teachers the freedom to infuse the curriculum with culturally relevant pedagogy, technology, and teacher made tests that complement the needs of *all* students in their classroom. They allow teachers to differentiate instruction, keep track of when skills were introduced, and when they plan to revisit those skills and build on them. If special education teachers and paraprofessionals are involved in the creation of ACGs or provided with a copy ahead of time, they will be able to ensure that curriculum modifications are both timely and appropriate. ACGs are useful to administrators in a number of ways. They give an overview of how course content unfolds over a period of time and the range of instructional activities that a teacher is using to deliver content and assess student learning. Not only does it facilitate the evaluation of effective instruction, it also allows administrators to determine if teachers need additional support in aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Table 2.6 Multicultural Web Site Resources

Information on Multicultural Education	
Digital History http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/	This site which is supported by the Department of History and the College of Education at the University of Houston was developed to support the teaching of American History in K-12 schools and colleges. It includes 72 inquiry-based interactive modules. The section on Ethnic Voices gives you access to information about the experiences of Asian, Italian, and Irish Americans. It allows teachers and students to create multimedia exhibitions. It will also give you access to bibliographies, classroom handouts, charts, chronologies, film guides, historic newspaper articles, primary source documents, lesson plans, historic maps, music, cartoons, quizzes, and images.

Table 2.6 (Continued)

Information on Multicultural Education	
cyberschoolbus http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/index.shtml	This United Nations Global Teaching and Learning web site will give you access to curriculum materials on poverty, human rights, world hunger, indigenous peoples, ethnic and racial discrimination. In addition to providing statistics about UN member statistics, UN webcasts, UN publications, this site provides a wide range of quizzes, video games, simulations, and an opportunity to compete with students across the globe and win exciting prizes.
K-12 Multicultural Children's Literature	
The International Children's Digital Library http://en.childrenslibrary.org/	The International Children's digital library a joint effort by the University of Maryland's Human-Computer Interaction Lab and The Internet Archive makes hundreds of children's books fully illustrated, and in their original language, freely available on the Web,-- fully illustrated, and in their original languages.
Database of Award Winning Literature http://www.dawcl.com/	This database created by Lisa Bartle a reference librarian at California State University, San Bernardino enables parents, bookstore personnel, teachers, young adults and children to create a tailored reading list of quality children's literature that have won one of the 89 indexed awards.
Children's Books about Disabilities http://www.teachervision.fen.com/learning-	This site provides you with a listing of books that can be used to deepen students' understanding of what it means to have disabilities like autism, deafness, and dyslexia.
Multicultural Book Reviews http://www.isomedia.com/homes/	This site will give you access not just to the book titles that other educators are using in their classrooms, but also their feedback about how students responded to the title.
Contemporary Immigrant Experiences in Children's Books http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/rts/emiert/usefullinks/contempimmigrant.pdf	This list, prepared by the Ethnic and Multicultural Information Exchange (EMIERT) Children's Committee, consists of book titles that capture the experiences of immigrant children in their home country and their country of choice.
K-12 Lesson Plans with a Multicultural Focus	
Diversity Council http://www.diversitycouncil.org/activities.shtml	This collection of ideas, lesson plans, and resources for elementary, middle, and high school students, put together by the Diversity Council will help you to engage students in a celebration of their multicultural heritage, an exploration of their biases, and an appreciation of other cultures.

Information on Multicultural Education	
Art Lesson Plans http://www.dickblick.com/multicultural/lessonplans/	This site contains twelve tried and tested art lessons submitted by Art teachers across the globe.
Critical Multicultural Pavilion http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/sites1.html	This site contains a wide range of resources organized under the following five sections: General Multicultural Education, Subjects, Disciplines and Fields, Teaching and Learning, Equity in Education, Historic Collections.
Professional Organizations	
National Association for Multicultural Education http://nameorg.org/	NAME brings together people from different academic disciplines and diverse educational institutions to explore ideas and concerns about multicultural education. Through its national and international conferences, it provides leadership in national and state dialogues on equity, diversity and multicultural education.
Teaching for Change http://teachingforchange.org/	This organization equips teachers and parents with tools to transform schools into centers of justice where students learn to read, write, and change the world.
National Organization on Disability http://www.nod.org/	This organization provides ideas about how to raise public awareness about disabilities and provides resources for individuals with disabilities. Join NOD's works in partnership with businesses, government, national philanthropies, and local organizations to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

2. Nurturing Critical Thinking in the Classroom

To regain our competitive edge globally we need to provide our students with a curriculum that is both culturally relevant and academically rigorous. This can be accomplished only if conversation moves from *the best way to deliver a standardized curriculum* to how we can help all students achieve *a depth of understanding*. Instead of focusing on *outcomes* we need to emphasize *process* and the importance of inquiry, construction of meaning, and collaboration.

Teaching students the difference between inferences and assumptions is an important critical thinking skill. The former is a conclusion that is made in light of available information. The latter is something that we take for granted.

Both inferences and assumptions permeate our lives. Teachers
students how to become more critical of the ways in which
created and used, and nurture in them a willingness to listen re
other students' opinions and suggestions, challenge their own assu
biases, and arrive at new insights.

Every subject we teach provides us with opportunities for
student recognition of inferences and assumptions. Social Studies c
themselves well to a discussion of the marginalized in society. Th
celebrities in the U.S far overshadows the attention paid to pe
disabilities. A critical thinking activity that gets students to list the p
are devalued or invisible within the school, community, and media c
into a discussion about the censorship at different levels of society
that social groups play in defending insiders and outsiders, and the im
this has on people who are marginalized (Florence, 2010).

Dramatization can be used to foster critical thinking. Students can
abstract concepts that are portrayed in print and electronic me
advertising. Students can analyze or create characters whose d
personalities illustrate abstract distinctions. Students can learn more
these abstract concepts by imagining what each of these characters
about themselves if they had the willingness to be candid and for
(Anonymous, 2009).

Science topics which invite controversy can be used to generate
discussions, where students weigh arguments, talk about the pros and
and discuss how viewpoints change over time. Students can write op
pieces which they can submit for publication in the local newspapers.
travelled students like Alex can bring a new and fresh perspective to classr
discussions. Mrs. Smith can, through the use of well thought out questions
well planned learning activities, use Alex's presence as an opportunity
promote "cultural understanding (appreciating of differences in socializat
patterns), cultural competence (developing cross-cultural skills and attitude
and cultural emancipation (addressing the link between group identities a
social privilege)" (McCarthy, 1990, cited in Florence, 2010, p.7).

Learn more about how to enrich your curriculum with content a
pedagogy that nurtures critical thinking by becoming a member of The Critic
Thinking Community at http://www.criticalthinking.org/.

3. High Expectations for All Students

Baron, Tom, and Cooper (1985, cited in Lee, Wehmeyer, Soukup &
Palmer, 2010) found that teachers' expectations are often based on the

assumption that the lower-class students from oppressed groups do not perform well. Teachers should move beyond what Carol Dweck (2006) called a *fixed mindset*, the belief that ability is a matter of heredity and home environment. Education is not about sorting students into "basic", "below basic", "proficient", and "advanced" groups. Instead of watering down the curriculum to move "less able" students forward, teachers should have high expectations of all students, and provide the support structure needed to maximize their potential (Tomlinson, 2010).

Garcia (1984, as cited in Lee et al., 2010) cautioned us against overcompensating for minority students. Lee et al. (2010) found that implementation of curriculum modifications for students with disabilities was a strong predictor of positive student academic responses. They found that there was a disproportionate use of curriculum modifications depending on subject area. Lee et al. also found that teachers who made curriculum modifications succeeded in engaging students with disabilities in more academic-related responses and fewer competing behaviors and had to deal with fewer classroom management activities. High expectations for all students, coupled with scaffolding for struggling learners and students with special needs, will increase the chances of a positive outcome. This can be accomplished by incorporating the principles of Universal Learning by Design which involves providing multiple means for students to access and respond to the content (Rose, Meyer, & Hitchcock, 2005).

High expectations should extend to students who speak multiple languages. Students like Alex could be given an opportunity to bring their linguistic skills into the classroom. Alex can be encouraged to teach other students words and phrases in another language; incorporate stories, songs, and YouTube clips into his presentations, which he can then translate into English for other students. Allowing Alex to do this will give students an opportunity to develop an appreciation of other cultures, prevent language loss in Alex, and allow him to experience pride, rather than shame in his cultural background.

SUMMARY

"The world is knocking at our door, the global village surrounds us, we cannot ignore the multiple impacts on our classroom" (Tiedt & Tiedt, 2010, p.xix). As we look at all the diversity in classrooms, we need to remember Barak Obama's words: "There is not a Black America and a White America and Latino America and Asian America—there is the United States of

America." With the profound impact that the federally mandated *No Child Left Behind Act* 2001 is having on our K-12 classrooms, it is easy to lose sight of the goal. Providing all students with a curriculum that is both culturally relevant and academically challenging is not impossible in a standards-driven environment. Standards can be wonderful guides for teaching. Teachers need to find creative ways of keeping the focus on the individual student rather than the high stakes tests.

Many of the gaps in the formal and hidden curriculum can be bridged though careful selection of multicultural content and well-designed, culturally relevant pedagogy. We have an abundance of creative, hard working teachers who are ready to do what it takes. School administrators need to trust teachers and engage them actively in creating seamless curriculum, instruction, and assessment procedures that work for their individual classrooms. Doing so will allow teachers to reclaim the joy of teaching and harness the potential of all students.

Questions For Reflection And/Or Discussion

1. What are some of the factors that prevent us from offering our students a multicultural curriculum? How should teachers and school administrators address these'factors?
2. Would students in racially homogeneous schools benefit from a multicultural curriculum? Why/ Why not?
3. Banks (1993) has identified four approaches that can be used to infuse multicultural content into the curriculum? Which approach is prevalent in your school? What would your classroom look like if you adopted the Social Action Approach?
4. How often do you think about the hidden curriculum and the impact that it can have on learning? What changes can you make in your classroom environment and curriculum to ensure that the hidden curriculum has a positive impact on your students?
5. How often do you evaluate the formal curriculum? What gaps have you found? What are some of the ways in which you can use the information contained in this chapter to fill these?

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