

Assimilation vs. Pluralism

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Abstract

This paper describes my viewpoint on assimilation and pluralism. I explain what assimilation and pluralism are and how they are different from one another. Then, I write about what my personal viewpoint is and how it ties in with pluralism. I state what my role as a teacher will be to uphold my personal viewpoint. As a teacher, I will have to be understanding and positive. I conclude the paper by talking about one learning strategy and one learning practice I have planned for my classroom. I write about word problems and a cultural “show and tell” day.

Keywords: assimilation, pluralism, cultures, immigration

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Personal Viewpoint

Between the years of 1830 and 1850, more than two million Europeans came to the United States (Tyack, 1967). These European immigrants mainly relocated from the countries of Germany and Ireland. They were left with no choice but to abandon their former identities to fit in with American society. Schools were left with the task of “Americanizing” the children through the process of assimilation. My viewpoint of assimilation is that it does more harm than good. Children learn to resent their own culture and even their own families. In public schools, students come together from different backgrounds to learn and interact with each other. No student should be put on a pedestal because of who they are and where they come from.

Immigration is a topic that hits close to home. My father was an immigrant, and he came to the United States at the age of thirteen. In 2019, 44.9 million immigrants were reported to be living in the United States (Esterline & Batalova, 2022). Most of these immigrants, including my father, relocated from Latin American countries. Instead of assimilation, we should practice cultural pluralism. This means immigrants get to keep their cultural identity. My viewpoint on pluralism is that it is extremely beneficial in our education system and our everyday lives. Students and teachers learn to accept one another.

Role as Teacher

As a teacher, I will help my students assimilate into American culture through the English language. The English language is beneficial for students to learn because it boosts their confidence and enhances their educational skills (“Why learning English,” 2018). Helping

students become proficient in English will be the one way I benefit from assimilation. The rest of the time I will promote cultural pluralism in my classroom. I do not plan on “Americanizing” my students like they did before in public schools. This would be silly of me as I was not even born in the United States myself. My role as a teacher will require me to understand the cultures of my students. Their culture may interfere with their education some days. An example of this is a student missing school because of a religious holiday. Instead of shaming them for not coming to school, I will ask them about how they celebrate in their religion. Taking interest in their cultures will let my students know that I care about them. My role as a teacher also entails me promoting positivity amongst my students. I will not allow students to bully each other because of their cultural differences.

Classroom Practices and Strategies

One learning practice I have planned to fit my viewpoint is using word problems to highlight the cultures of my students. I would use their names and incorporate them into the equations they have to solve. For example, I may have students who practice Judaism. I can create a math problem that asks students to divide portions for their Bar Mitzvah. By incorporating their background into learning, they will become more engaged as the problems relate to them. Another learning strategy I have planned to fit my viewpoint is having students talk with one another about their traditions and beliefs. I do not want them to navigate life with a closed mind about people who are different from them. I want to have a day in class that is a “show and tell” of my students' cultures. Currently, I cannot think of a way to tie this back to math, but I will cross that bridge when I get there. My classroom will be a safe space for everyone, and I will have a zero-tolerance policy for bullying.

References

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