

A Cultural Comparison

Inquiry Project

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Introduction

For this inquiry project I interviewed Brandy Ortiz, program coordinator for El Centro at Colorado State, and Luke Herbert, a middle school visual arts teacher at Fort Lupton Middle School. Brandy Ortiz is a Mexican-American woman in her mid 30's born and raised in Colorado. She attended Irish and Lauren Elementary, Lincoln Junior High, and Poudre High school. Brandy received a Bachelors Degree from Colorado State University. Luke Herbert is a white male in his mid 30's. Luke attended his K-12 schooling in Greeley, Colorado. He finished his undergraduate and graduate degree from the University of Northern Colorado. Luke and Brandy both have an interesting outlook on the purpose of schooling in the United States. Both were raised in a similar geographic location, yet their culturally different backgrounds gave an interesting take on education and socioeconomic and cultural diversity in schools.

Luke Hebert, a Visual Arts teacher at Fort Lupton Middle School, has been teaching there for 8 years. He received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in Art Education from UNC, Greeley. He began his first teaching job at Fort Lupton Middle School, taking over the Visual Arts Department. The cultural demographic of FLMS is primary Hispanic, about 70%, the with white, African American and Asian American population at bout 25%. It was very inspiring and hopeful meeting Luke. He has a very positive outlook on learning and is using some progressive and alternative teaching strategies in his educational curriculum.

Brandy Ortiz is a Mexican American woman who was raised in a low-income Hispanic family in Fort Collins. After receiving her Bachelors Degree from Colorado

State University, she began working as the Program Coordinator for El Centro. Both Brandy and Luke have an interesting and similar outlook on the purpose of schooling in the United States. Their culturally different backgrounds lead to an inherent variance in some of the main goals in the future of education.

Compare and Contrast

Purpose of Schooling

Both Brandy and Luke felt the primary purpose of schooling in the United States is to lay down a proper foundation for children. Luke expressed the “Importance of making a well rounded human-being.” This is the groundwork for citizens. Learning the basic fundamentals and humanistic skills to function with other people are paramount. The world can be a nasty place and it is extremely important to teach young kids how to work together and be good to others. Brandy described the primary purpose of schooling not only as the education in subjects like Math, Science, and History, but to “Actually teach them how to be a good citizen”. Both of their outlooks were insightful and lined similarly with my views and feelings on schooling. Kids need to learn essential behaviors in early childhood like patients, empathy, and how to be good people. Drawing from “Memories and personal meaning are most likely to become relational and long-term memories (Willis, 2006, P.21). Brandy expressed in her experience in school that many of these ideals for children were not explicitly outlined. She remembers her early schooling not focusing on the behavioral and social aspects of development, but more so outlined with learning the main topics, like the “A, B, C’s and 1,2,3s.” She feels that there is a bigger needs to incorporate behavioral aspects in learning and focus more on teaching how to be a good citizens and critical thinkers.

Experience in Schooling

As Brandy got older she began to realize there were things that should have been outlined better when she was younger. Her ethnic, culturally diverse background, and family life gave her insight on things like the deculturalization of the American Indians. She questioned why the oppression of cultures like this was never addressed in U.S. schooling. As said by Spring (2010), “Most of the world’s indigenous peoples suffered some form of deculturalization.” Brandy felt as if this information was left out or she had been taught wrong. This seems to be a misconception or commonly missed educational history lesson in schools. It wasn’t that the information was necessarily untrue, but seemed as if a lot of the truth and facts were left out. This realization seems unfortunately common throughout schools’ history curriculums regarding the natives to our country. Luke expressed the importance of social interaction between students during this pivotal time of primary and middle school. He remembers the personalities and interactions with his classmates, more so than the classroom management. He feels as though these interactions with friends build up to one’s personality traits. Luke feels as though education is constantly evolving. We are getting to a point in our educational philosophy where we are starting to “pinpoint and understand the individualized learner as the way of the future.”

Are Schools Meeting the Needs of All Diverse Learners?

Luke is very hopeful that education is only going to get better, especially with all of the new technologies that are prevalent in the school systems today. He feels that the schools are doing everything they can to meet the various needs and varying abilities of students. They are not hitting 100 percent, but that is impossible, but feels they are

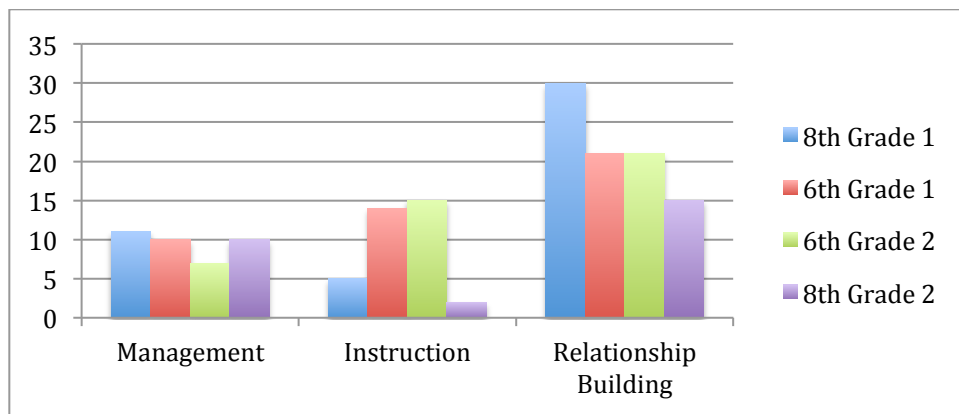
doing to best they can, in regards to FLMS. Brandy feels a bit different about meeting the individual needs of learners. She feels that elementary schools are not doing a good job in meeting the needs of ALL learners. She feels that socioeconomic status has a “huge impact on the learner”. It doesn’t seem right to put learners together in one classroom and place the same expectations on various individuals. She remembers her mom struggling financially. Her mother had difficulty getting Brandy and her five siblings to school on time. This affected her younger sister in the fact that she was usually late to school and would miss the morning reading. Brandy feels that her sister missed out on important reading education and to this day still struggles with it. This could have been easily avoided if there would have been a school bus to pick her and her siblings up, which they didn’t have in her low-income area. She feels that a lot of the time teachers in schools don’t understand the struggle people living in poverty have go through to get to the same place as others more fortunate. She feels that there needs to be more resources for those students. Brandy missed out on things like base camps and summer programs because her parents didn’t have enough money to send her and her siblings. She wishes schools would do more for the success of ethnically diverse students as well as students living in poverty. It is very interesting to hear the opinions and testimonies of two community members of different culturally ethnic backgrounds. Both Luke and Brandy had a difference of opinion on schools ability to meet the needs of low-income families, yet both had a very similar outlook on the importance and purpose of schooling.

Observations

I really enjoyed observing Luke Hebert’s middle school visual arts classroom. I spend the morning and afternoon with Luke from 10:25 until the end of the day at

3:25. In this time I observed two of his 8th grade classes and two of his 6th grade classes. He gave me some unique insight in classroom management, as well as some progressive teaching strategies from the “Choice-Based” art education-learning model. It was an inspiring experience to meet and observe a male teacher in the art education field. Luke applies a strategy called Choice- Based Art Education learning to his curriculum. This teaching strategy is very open for students to express themselves. He allows them to create their own projects based on their interests. Adding this element of interest to projects draws on prior knowledge. According to Mckenna (2009), “The teacher can improve comprehension by enhancing background prior knowledge.” This creates passion and the want to learn, as well as, accomplishing the final goal for the project. Luke outlines his period into three projects where the students create an idea. Though brainstorming, proposal, application, and an artist statement they create an outline for their individualized project. Luke must approve every project and the media used. It is up to the students to apply thought process to get their projects done before their deadline. Most of the students chose drawing with a various media in painting, colored pencil, and markers. Some students used paper mache to create large 3-D sculpture. His classroom was of varying culturally diversity, comprised mostly of Hispanic students, small group of white and African- Americans. The gender rolls in the classroom were pretty evenly matched from boys to girls. In the 6th grade 2 class there were 8 girls and 9 boys. I noticed most of the questions came from boys. As well it seemed as if the boys of this classroom needed more attention than the girls. Luke was able to work strategically around the classroom assisting the small groups

at their table clusters. His teaching style is non-traditional and didn't allow for very much lecture time, permitting students to be more engaged in their projects. I could really see a difference in the student's attention to their projects. Allowing them to make individualized decisions gives the students more freedom and passion for their projects. This in turn allows for more relationship building and less instruction. As seen on the graph below most of the time spend each classroom is spent on an open work classroom, building relationships between students and teacher. In all the classes, instruction and classroom management were evenly matched. The vertical axis represents the time in minutes and the horizontal axis represents the room management strategy expressed throughout the class period.



Luke has been teaching this style in his classroom for the past two years. The first couple years out of college for him were very difficult. After implementing this strategy the classroom opened up and allowed for him to fine tune and bring more interest to the classroom. Luke wants his students to understand the importance of process. Students need to understand that if something doesn't come out right the first time you do it again until you get it right. This is an interesting concept that creates life-long learners. "Choice Based Art Education fosters imagination" (TAB –

Teaching For Artistic Behavior, 2016). It was truthfully intriguing to see a classroom run under this alternative learning style. I was apart of a program in high school in which the ideals and structure was similar, but seeing the application in a middle school classroom was enlightening.

Conclusion

Luke's main hope for the future in schools is more money. I assume most teachers feel this way. When discussing the financial state of schools in the U.S. it seems as if they are always lacking financial backing. This in turn cuts down on spending for school programs and seemingly leaves the low-income families in the dark. Luke hopes that the future will bring more individualized learning for students. Not all children have the same learning style and learn at the same rate. Nieto (2012) says, "Learning style is usually defined as the way in which individuals receive and process information." Brandy hopes that more people of ethnic diversity coming from poverty will be able to receive proper education, go to college, and become a successful contributing member of society. She hopes as well for the continuation of culturally diverse learning for the future teachers. Brandy and Luke both agree on the idea that teachers need to be educated and practice more individualized learning with students. One of Brandy's worries for the future of education is the amount of ethnically diverse teachers in addition ethnically diverse males wanting to go into teaching. She feels there is a lack of ethnic and cultural diversity for the future teachers and those interested in teaching. The majority of those involved in the teaching programs are white females. She hopes for a more culturally diverse future in the U.S. school system. This experience has been very

educational and eye opening for me. Getting the perspective of someone of a different cultural and ethnic upbringing from my own was essential to gaining an understanding of others experience in the U.S. School system. The classroom experience from Luke Herbert's middle school art class was wonderful. Gaining perspective on different educational strategies is paramount. It was refreshing to get a first hand account on todays school system and see what seems to be working and what needs to be worked on for the future.

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Field Notes:

Observation Log

*NOTE: You may need to make a second or third copy of this observation log before going to the teacher's classroom to observe.

TIME	# of Minutes	Description of the Activity	CODE (M, R, I)
11:55	5	6TH GRADE 1 SEN CON	M
12:05	5	PROJ DISCUSSION	I
12:05	6	WORKING ON PROJECTS	P
12:11	4	QUESTIONS	I
12:15	2	WORKING WITH STUDENT GROUP	P
12:17	3	GROUP GROUP	P
12:20	12	GROUP GROUP	P
12:30	5	QUESTIONS	I
12:35	5	CLEANUP	M
12:40		CLASS WORK	
12:45			
Total Time	Total Minutes	60	

Observation Log

*NOTE: You may need to make a second or third copy of this observation log before going to the teacher's classroom to observe.

TIME	# of Minutes	Description of the Activity	CODE (M, R, I)
1:15	3	6TH GRADE 2 ATTENDANCE INFO	M
1:18	4	WORKING WITH STUDENTS	I
1:24	11	OPEN WORK PERIOD	P
1:34	6	WORKING WITH STUDENT	P
1:45	6	INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS	P
1:51	4	CLEAN UP	M
1:55			
2:15		CLASS WORK	
Total Time	Total Minutes	60	

Observation Log

*NOTE: You may need to make a second or third copy of this observation log before going to the teacher's classroom to observe.

TIME	# of Minutes	Description of the Activity	CODE (M, R, I)
10:25	2	6TH GRADE 1 ATTENDANCE	M
10:27	8	EXPERIMENT WORKING PROJECT	M
10:27	8	EXPERIMENT WORK DAILY	P
10:40	20	ASSISTANCE TO STUDENT	I
11:00	5	INTERACTION	P
11:05	5	INTERACTION w/ STUDENTS	P
11:10	1	CLEANUP	M
11:15		END	
Total Time	Total Minutes	60	

Observation Log

*NOTE: You may need to make a second or third copy of this observation log before going to the teacher's classroom to observe.

TIME	# of Minutes	Description of the Activity	CODE (M, R, I)
2:40	5	6TH GRADE 2 ATTENDANCE	M
2:40	2	ATTENDANCE	M
2:43	2	WORKING WITH STUDENTS	P
2:45	15	EXPERIMENT WORK DAILY	P
2:50	5	CLEANUP	M
2:55		CLASS WORK	
3:45			
Total Time	Total Minutes	60	

Interview with Luke Herbert



Interview with Brandy Ortiz

