

**Capstone Synthesis**

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As a future teacher, it is my hope to create an environment with all students in mind. The classroom should not be set to default, where teachers prepare for the majority and make exceptions for students who don't fit that mold. My research in this class has shown me that I can never be stagnant in my pursuit to reach all students. Coming to know of the experiences and needs of others different than myself, pushes me to mold my classroom into a place that was made with every student in mind. No student is the same, no student is typical, and no student is an inconvenience; education is for everyone. The following is a reflection of that philosophy and how I will implement it into my future classroom.

## **Cultural Diversity**

### **Creating a Culturally Rich Education Environment for All**

The cultural experiences of every student are unique, and it reflects their family history and uniqueness. A classroom environment that is aware of this cultural diversity is one that celebrates that uniqueness. A culturally aware teacher is one that does not assume the cultural experiences of any student based on their appearance, stereotypes, or the status quo. Making all students feel accepted and comfortable begins with creating a culture of empathy, understanding. Inviting speakers, studying different cultures, celebrating with cultural stories and encouraging students to share their culture are just baseline ways to begin making the classroom culturally accepting. This culture will be reinforced with lots of posters and décor that celebrate cultures and all people. (Appendix A)

### **Native American Students**

Native American students are among some of the most marginalized demographics in education. Many native American values are in direct conflict with the set-up of the American

classroom, including the observation style of learning and character values. These values, while different than what is considered standard American values, are based in understanding, empathy, and honor. These values should be considered when teaching, as to not alienate or discourage these children from participating or truly learning the content. “Positive representations could help to counter the negative stereotypes of minority students that may potentially bias minority students’ emerging self-representations and performance” (Cvencek, et al, 2018)

### **Trauma**

I want to create an environment that is safe, welcoming, and adaptable to the needs of students who experience or are dealing with the effects of trauma. My plan will begin with my attitude as an educator. At all times, I want my students to feel supported by me and the school.

### **Physical Safety**

I recognize that in order for any real learning to take place, the physical needs of a student must be met first. This includes not only meeting the key needs of hunger, clothing, and shelter, a student needs to feel safe in a physical sense. For students experiencing trauma that includes neglect, I will keep small healthy snacks in my cabinets for students who are hungry. For children experiencing physical trauma, I will be aware of bruises and signs of physical abuse. In these cases, I will report abuse at any suspicion. For students who are experiencing trauma in a physical way, I will work with counselors and specialists within the school to create safe areas. On the matter of physical safety, I will always allow the child to choose and lead how much

physical integration they have with me and their peers. Students will always be given the choice of a contactless greeting, with both myself and each other.

### **Emotional Safety**

Emotional comfortability is a prerequisite for any effective learning environment. To ensure this, I will have emotional education and awareness at the forefront of our classroom guidelines and procedures. We will have a classroom promise that includes the promise to always respect and be kind to others, as well as guidelines for communication. We will begin each day by sharing how we are feeling with a finger scale and share out of they are comfortable. However, I am aware that children who are experiencing trauma, may share something that might unsettle the other students. For this, I also want them to have personal journals. (Appendix B) We will do emotional-wellness activities that involve reflecting and writing about how they feel. For students who are experiencing trauma, I understand that they may often act-out and exhibit behaviors that are not acceptable for a learning environment. (Morton and Berardi, 2018). Additionally, when students do experience stress, meltdowns, or conflicts, we will have a procedure for calming down, talking things out, and problem solving. This procedure will rely heavily on using the emotional awareness strategies we are learning in class. Students who struggle with trauma will be given ways to calm themselves down, take a break in outside of the classroom, and talk about how they are feeling. (Appendix C)

Something that I want to focus on is avoiding triggers that may set off a child dealing with trauma. For this reason, I will not assume the experiences of any child. The term “family” will be used in instead of parents. I will ask the students to share their experiences rather than assuming I have an example that will apply to all students.

## **Interventions**

It is often that students with trauma, disabilities, and behavioral issues, will need interventions in collaboration between the teacher and specialists. I will advocate for my students who need these services and support them in ways that allow for academic success amidst their circumstances. I will work with the specialists in my school and openly communicate and advocate for what my students might need, or what they are experiencing. I will advocate for sensory rooms, emotional quiet rooms, and other spaces for these children if they do not already exist within the school.

## **Human Relations**

### **Students with different abilities**

The traditional classroom is designed for typically abled students, traditionally depicted by desks and chairs all in a row. This set-up, however, is not suited for students with disabilities, both cognitive, and physical. My classroom will be including a variety of seating options for all students, to support their different needs. Students with ADHD or similar disorders will be offered the option of flexible seating. Students with physical and motor disabilities will be able to move about in the classroom through clear pathways. (Appendix D) All tables will be wheelchair accessible. All chairs will be easily moveable, to enforce my policy that the classroom is made for all students, and no one is an inconvenience. I will “use an open cabinet with wide shelves to store student supply boxes, with boxes at arm’s length or closer to the floor for students using wheelchairs or other assistive devices to get around the classroom.” (Barbara, 2009)

For these students to feel emotionally comfortable in my classroom, there must be a culture of empathy and understanding. Students with disabilities will be represented in books and media used and displayed in the classroom. (Appendix E)

### **Gender and Gender Roles**

Childhood is a time of exploration and self-discovery. This process is incredibly important for the development of a child's self-concept. Gender and gender roles play a significant role in how behaviors have been viewed historically. However, children need to be allowed a safe space to explore and learn about themselves. In the classroom, gender roles and expectations will not be forced onto students or used as a basis of what is "normal". My classroom promise will include being kind to our classmates no matter their differences

Inclusivity for transgender students and students who have different family structures is absolutely key in making children feel accepted and represented. The difficult choices that come along with these circumstances can negatively impact the child, so it's important as educators to alleviate that stress by not adding to it or voicing personal opinions. The mental health of the child is what matters first, as no learning will take place if it isn't.

### **Parent Involvement**

Students of all different backgrounds are a reflection of their families, and their uniqueness. They are diverse in their circumstances, and family structures. There will be many different opportunities for parents to participate in the classroom, including volunteering, reading, speaking, and an online group.

### **Conclusion**

Diversity in the classroom is not something that should be treated like a “what if” scenario. Diversity exists, it is not an object or an achievement but the reality. Education needs to reflect this truth, and it begins with teachers rejecting the status quo and redefining what is typical.

## Sources

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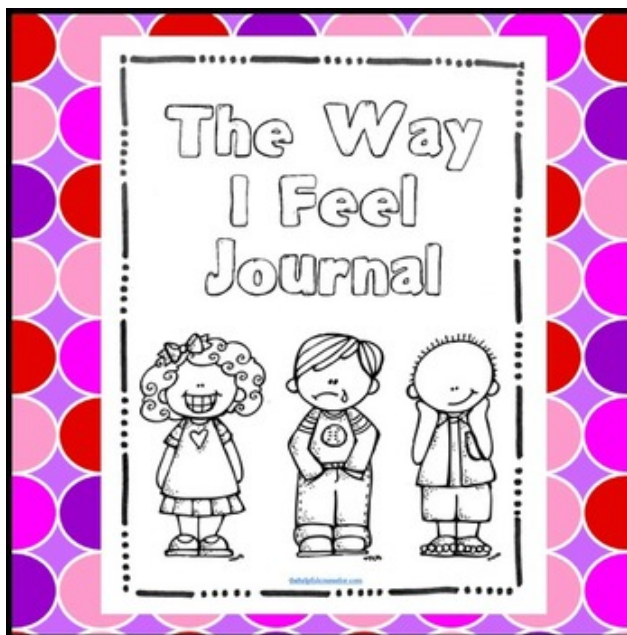
Appendix A



Diversity Poster example

Credit: <https://www.csus.edu/indiv/t/tashirol/vcsl/>

## Appendix B



Feelings Journal

Credit: <https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/Feelings-Journal-643386>

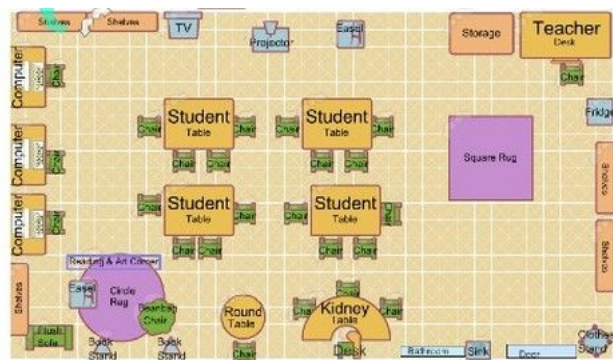
## Appendix C



Calm Down Corner

credit: <https://inspiremeasap.com/2015/01/fun-with-fidgets.html>

## Appendix D



Wheelchair Accessible Classroom

Credit: <http://studentswithphysicaldisabilities.weebly.com/practical-teaching-ideas.html>

## Appendix E



Diverse Classroom Library Examples

Credit: <https://www.ssw.com/blog/creating-diversity-thoughtful-classroom-library/>