

Reading Reflection #7  
**Creating a Multicultural Classroom Environment**

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I think exposure to other cultures in the classroom is important because I never really had that growing up in my elementary and middle school classrooms. In social studies, we only really focused on past cultures and civilizations (as far as I recall), and while that does have an impact on cultures today, I cannot remember making that connection in class. The first time I felt I was actively learning about modern cultures was in my Spanish class in high school. Some of our activities were solely culture-based, but some activities were for learning the language through bits of cultural exposure; all in all, I had a more concrete idea of culture in Mexico and Spain after that class. However, because that experience was not until high school, I don't think I was really able to stray from the childish impressions and stereotypes that I learned outside of school until I was much older. I believe that learning about other cultures in a real, tangible sense inside the classroom would have helped me gain a more realistic idea of other world cultures from a young age (§ 4).

However, I don't think this is a simple task, and part of the preparation for a multicultural classroom is background knowledge about many different cultures (§ 6). Not only knowledge about diverse cultures, but also the students' background information, such as beliefs, values, and customs (§ 7). I'm curious about how teachers of a multicultural classroom acquire that knowledge. Do they learn it slowly over time as they get to know their students? Is it part of the parent-teacher relationship? Or maybe do they learn about their students from previous teachers? I've learned through site experience in this service learning course that teachers need to put in a lot of effort for their classes, but I can't visualize how to prepare for this aspect of teaching.

This also connects back to the third reading—*World-Readiness Standards*—as well as the emphasized “21st century skills.” Because multicultural programs encourage communication and cooperation, not only does this satisfy most of the “Five C’s” in the World-Readiness Standards, but it also assists toward the acquisition of important life-skills such as working in groups and navigating social differences. In

addition, the part of this reading that discussed adding a “multicultural perspective” to the management and curriculum of the classroom reminded me of similar advice in the *Teaching for a Better World* reading, specifically how the author suggested adding globally-relevant content to the language learning experience (¶ 10). I think it’s especially important to give what is being covered in the classroom additional purpose because classroom time is very valuable to both the student and the teacher.

In our service learning at CPY last week, my team tried to implement the ideas presented in this article: encourage children to recognize the cultural similarities and differences through the exploration of various cultures (¶ 3). This also contributed toward the fourth service learning outcome, “Multicultural Community Building.” While introducing the unique aspects of three specific Japanese yokai with the kids, many asked questions about what monsters are similar outside of Japan in America (¶ 6). I was surprised that for many of the students, they already had some passing knowledge of yokai from a tv show they watch on Disney channel: Yokai Watch. For those students, because they are already a bit familiar with the content, yokai were not completely outside of their existing culture. At this time, we were able to help them make the connection that the monsters in yokai watch originated in Japan and provided additional cultural relevance to their existing idea of yokai. I think for us, the kids making connections between yokai and monsters in other cultures as well as their own is part of multiculturalism in our classroom.

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Notes: (connect to previous readings?)

- Children asking about similar monsters in America ¶3,9
- Why exposure is important: Not foreign and weird, but normal and part of life ¶4
  - Don't recognize yokai watch as abnormal/different
- *How to acquire all that knowledge: Slowly over time? Questionnaire at the beginning of class? Dossier from parents? ¶6/7*
- **Some of our lesson ideas (monsters, food) ¶10**
- *Know more beyond what you planned/prepared ¶6*
- *Connect to diverse world reading ¶12*
- *Communication skills ¶5*
- *Asked a ton of questions, both about the new culture and regular (lesson setup encouraged questioning) ¶6*