

Equity in the Classroom

According to Zeichner (1992), one of the 12 elements of a successful teacher states, "Teachers are personally committed to achieving equity for all students and believe that they are capable of making a difference in their students' learning." No two students are created the same, which means that not every student learns the same way. Because of this, teachers cannot simply teach, "by the book" for every single classroom, year after year. In order to compensate for different student needs, teachers must be creative in their teaching strategies to make sure they capture all students in their lessons to maximize student learning.

In Step 1 of my UTeach experience, I taught a 4th grade dual-language class. For most of the students, English was their second language and many struggled when vocabulary terms were introduced. Many did not participate when discussing new vocab terms because they were afraid to make a mistake when pronouncing it and also were unsure of the definition. During class, I wrote the new lessons vocab words on the board and had the whole class repeat the words together in order to practice reciting it out loud. This helped the students not only hear the word but see the word on the wall as well. During the lesson, I also encouraged group talk. For many students, having a classmate translate the information in Spanish first helped them understand the concept.

In CI, my classroom had a different personality. The classroom was fairly evenly split between male and female but it was obvious that the males were more willing to participate in discussion than female. Males would raise their hands and call out the answers while girls sat idle and didn't make efforts to speak in class. It was important to engage all students so instead of asking the class, I started asking the students to discuss the answers with their shoulder buddy. This forced the females to communicate with others, but also took away the fear of answering in front of the whole class. Then, I asked each group to share, which allowed for the females to answer with more confidence, because they had discussed their ideas with others, and could recite their group's conversation.

While classrooms have different personalities, each student also comes with his or her differences and leaning disabilities. We as teachers must take special notice to help those who need extra help and to bring them up to the level of the whole class. For example, a student in my CI Algebra II class had ADD and often got off task. In order to keep him engaged, I periodically walked over and stood by him to make sure he was on task and engaged. Another one of my students had special needs and after giving the whole class directions, I individually repeated them to him to make sure he understood the directions.

Learning styles also differ among students, which requires teachers to present their information in various styles. Some benefit from hands on learning while others learn better with visuals. In my CI lesson, I tried to incorporate pictures in my power point to capture the visual learners as well as present a hands-on group activity to interest the hands-on learners. Varying one's teaching styles will help expand the audience of learners and help engage more than one type of learner.

Teaching requires creativity of lesson plans and dedication to student needs. All students have the right to learn, and it is the teacher's job to make sure every student has the same opportunity to learn and succeed.