

eleventh edition



# Multicultural Education in a Pluralistic Society

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Donna M. Gollnick & Philip C. Chinn



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Eleventh Edition

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# About the Authors



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# Preface

A decade from now, we may look back at this period of time as a turning point in addressing racism in the United States. Today, young people, activists, politicians, and commentators are publicly labeling selected politicians and other leaders as *racists* and *sexists* because of their tweets and words against people of color, immigrants, Jewish people, Muslims, women, gender-nonconforming people, and other LGBTQI+ people. Not only are the racist and sexist words and actions of national, state, and local leaders being outed but also the policies and actions of governments that have made the lives of many citizens difficult and that do not live up to the egalitarian values that many of us thought made the United States different than the rest of the world. Unarmed young men of color continue to be killed at disproportionately high rates. Mass murders against people of color, Jewish people, and Muslims continue to be committed by people whose manifestos indicate that they believe in White nationalism and that people without a White European background do not deserve to live in the United States. In 2019 alone, 22 people had been murdered at an El Paso, Texas, Walmart; 51 at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand; two in a Walmart in South Haven, Mississippi; and one in a synagogue in Poway, California. Time will tell whether these events and the many others that occurred in the past decade lead to a public outcry by people of all races that will change the policies and practices that discriminate against people of color, people in low-income families, people who are not Christian, LGBTQI+ people, and others.

The eleventh edition of *Multicultural Education in a Pluralistic Society* examines issues of race, diversity, and equity in society and their impact on students and teachers. Societal actions and attitudes are reflected in schools. As a result, the number of students who are being harassed because of their race, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation has increased since 2016. Too many students of color, students from low-income families, and students with disabilities still do not have the opportunities to achieve at the same level as their White European American middle-class peers. At the same time, many educators promote diversity and equity as they develop instructional strategies for helping all students learn. To explore these inequitable conditions and their implications for the classroom, the book introduces future teachers to the different cultural groups to which they and their students belong and the importance of building on students' cultures and experiences to engage them actively in their learning and eliminate the opportunity gaps that continue to exist in schools.

## About the Eleventh Edition

Students in undergraduate, graduate, and in-service courses will find this text helpful in examining social and cultural conditions that impact education. It provides the foundation for understanding diversity and using this knowledge effectively in classrooms and schools to help students learn. Other social services professionals will find it helpful in understanding the complexity of cultural backgrounds and experiences as they work with families and children from diverse groups.

As in previous editions, we approach multicultural education with a broad perspective of the concept. Using culture as the basis for understanding multicultural education, we discuss the cultural groups to which we belong and the impact those group memberships have on us and our treatment in society and schools.

We also emphasize the importance of an equitable education for all students. Educators should both be aware of and confront racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, and discrimination based on abilities, language, religion, geography, and age. Schools can eradicate discrimination in their own policies and practices if educators are committed to confronting and eliminating those policies and practices. The eleventh edition helps readers develop the habit of self-reflection that will assist them in becoming more effective teachers in classrooms that respect and value the cultures of students and their families and build on their cultures to provide equity for all students.

*Multicultural Education in a Pluralistic Society* explores diversity and equity in society and schools. The first chapter examines the pervasive influence of culture, the importance of understanding our own and our students' cultural backgrounds and experiences, and the evolution of multicultural education. The next nine chapters examine ethnicity and race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, exceptionalism, language, religion, geography (that is, the places we live), and youth culture. The final chapter makes recommendations for using culturally responsive, culturally sustaining, and social justice pedagogies in the implementation of education that is multicultural. The chapters in this edition have been revised and reorganized to reflect current thinking and research in the area. Each chapter opens with a scenario to place the topic in an educational setting.

We have tried to present different perspectives on a number of issues in the most unbiased manner possible. We are not without strong opinions or passion on some of the issues. However, in our effort to be equitable, we attempt to

present different perspectives on the issues and allow the reader to make his or her own decisions. There are some issues related to racism, sexism, ableism, and so on, that are so important to the well-being of society that we do provide our positions, which we recognize to be our biases.

Readers should be aware of several caveats related to the language used in this text. Although we realize that the term *American* is commonly used to refer to the U.S. population, we view *American* as including other North and South Americans as well. Therefore, we have tried to limit the use of this term when referring to the United States. However, we generally use ethnic identifications such as African American or Asian American to identify people by their ethnic heritages rather than race. We generally use *Latinx* rather than *Hispanic* or *Latino* to refer to persons with Spanish-speaking heritages who have emigrated from countries as diverse as Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, Puerto Rico, Belize, and Colombia. *First Americans*, *American Indians*, and *Native Americans* are used interchangeably throughout the book. Racial classifications of *Black* and *White* have been used when we refer to data that have been collected using those categories. *White* has been used throughout the text to identify White European Americans because that is the term most often used in the literature and academic discussions. We use *persons of color* to refer to groups of African Americans, Alaska Natives, American Indians, Asian Americans, Latinx, Native Hawaiians, and people of two or more races.

## New to This Edition

The eleventh edition of this text offers many new and exciting elements, including MyLab integration as well as new and updated features, content, data, and references.

- New chapter-opening case studies (Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, and 11) address diverse issues and scenarios that teachers face today.
- The new “Revisiting the Opening Case Study” feature at the end of each chapter reflects on what was learned in the chapter related to the opening case study and includes application questions to help students think about how they would apply the chapter content to their own teaching.
- New (Chapters 3, 8, and 10) and updated and expanded (Chapter 11) Critical Incidents features highlight important topics covered in the chapter that might challenge teachers in the school environment.
- The “Focus Your Cultural Lens” feature in the tenth edition has been retitled “Explore and Focus Your Cultural Lens” and still discusses contemporary and controversial educational issues, but now it also includes questions that prompt students to reflect on their own thoughts and biases on the feature topics.

- New “Explore and Focus Your Cultural Lens” features (Chapters 1, 4, and 11) address current controversies in education.
- Updated content for students on how to apply chapter concepts to real-world classrooms and schools is now titled “Classroom Implications” in Chapters 2–10 for quick and easy reference.
- New bullet-pointed chapter summaries that summarize the major topics addressed in each chapter have been added to the end of chapters.
- All chapters reflect recent events and research that have impacted the topics addressed throughout the book.
- All tables, figures, and references reflect the latest data and thinking about the issues explored in the book.

## MyLab Education

One of the most visible changes in the eleventh edition is the expansion of the digital learning and assessment resources embedded in the eText and the inclusion of MyLab Education in the text. MyLab Education is an online homework, tutorial, and assessment program designed to work with the text to engage learners and to improve learning. Within its structured environment, learners see key concepts demonstrated through real classroom video footage, practice what they learn, test their understanding, and receive feedback to guide their learning and to ensure their mastery of key learning outcomes. Designed to help learners see the real and powerful impact of multicultural education concepts covered in this book, the online resources in MyLab Education with the Enhanced eText include:

- Application Exercises, featured in every chapter, provide activities centered on videos or written case studies that give learners opportunities to practice applying the content and strategies from the chapters. Once learners provide their own answers to the questions, they receive feedback in the form of model answers written by experts.
- Video Examples, new or updated in every chapter, highlight key chapter topics and diverse classrooms and populations. Accompanying guided questions help students focus on and critically consider the important topics covered in the videos.
- Self-Check Quizzes follow each major chapter section. In each chapter, self-check quizzes help assess how well learners have mastered the content. The self-checks are made up of self-grading multiple-choice items that not only provide feedback on whether questions are answered correctly or incorrectly but also provide rationales for both correct and incorrect answers.

## Key Content Updates by Chapter

The eleventh edition of this text has been updated and expanded to address a number of important contemporary issues in society and schools that are affecting the lives of students, teachers, and parents as they work together to help children and youth learn at high levels. Some of the major changes that you will see in chapters are listed below.

- Chapter 1 now includes a section on hate that addresses hate groups and their rising visibility in the United States. The section on privilege has been revised to clarify our membership in both privileged and non-privileged groups.
- Chapter 2 includes an expansion of the discussion of indigenous groups in the United States to include Alaska Natives as well as American Indians and Native Hawaiians. The section on the “Struggle for Civil Rights” now addresses the antecedents to the civil rights movement and the status of racial equality today. Chapter 2 clarifies and expands on the issues of racism and Whiteness, which are central in political and educational discussions today.
- Chapter 3 includes a new section, “Struggles against Economic Injustice,” which provides a historical context for the economic inequalities in the United States.
- Chapter 4 includes an expanded discussion of gender identity that describes the gender fluidity that exists in today’s society and schools. The new “Explore and Focus Your Cultural Lens” feature asks students to think about the issues related to transgender students’ use of bathrooms in schools. Chapter 4 has an updated and expanded discussion of the struggles for gender equity that includes the #MeToo movement. The importance of the influence of intersectionality and the interaction of gender with one’s racial, ethnic, class, and religious identity has been clarified and expanded.
- Chapter 5 includes an updated and enhanced discussion of the struggles for sexual equity and a new section on sex education in today’s schools.
- Chapter 6 includes an enhanced section on athletics and individuals with disabilities, including the World Games and the promotion of the Invictus Games by Prince Harry, the Duke of Sussex. Also included is coverage of lead poisoning as a contributing factor in disability in children and the Flint, Michigan, water crises.
- Chapter 7 has updated information on bilingual education including dual language immersion programs.

Also addressed are the efforts to dismantle bilingual education and a California law reversing some of these attempts.

- Chapter 8 has a new section relating to current critical issues facing some of the religious denominations today, such as possible schisms, and clergy abuse issues. The relationship between religion and the current political climate in the United States is addressed.
- Chapter 9 includes a new section on the Northern Triangle, the three countries where most of the Central American immigrants are fleeing from, and the reasons for their mass exodus. Also included are the effects of globalism and how the #MeToo movement has spread across the globe.
- Chapter 10 includes an extensive description of Generation Z (or iGen) and new coverage on adolescent substance abuse including the use of e-cigarettes and opioid addiction. A new section on Generation Alpha, the children of millennials, is included. This group already has a profound influence on their families’ purchasing practices and consequently on business marketing.
- Chapter 11 includes new sections on reality pedagogy, culturally sustaining pedagogies, and making classrooms democratic.

## Features

Each chapter includes the following features that illustrate how concepts and events play out in a classroom or school.

### Chapter-Opening Classroom Scenarios

Each chapter opens with a classroom scenario to place the chapter content in an educational setting. Questions at the end of each scenario encourage readers to think about the scenario and reflect on the decisions they would make in relation to the scenario topics.

#### Opening Case Study

Guadalupe “Lupe” Gutierrez, a third-grade teacher at Martin Luther King Elementary School, has been asked to see the principal, Erin Wilkerson, after the students leave. Dr. Wilkerson explains that the school is expanding its full inclusion program, in which special education children, including those with severe disabilities, are fully integrated into general education classrooms. Congruent with school district policy, King Elementary is enhancing its efforts to integrate special education students into general education settings. Gutierrez’s classroom is one of four general education classrooms in which special education students will be placed in the next few weeks. “What this will involve, Lupe, is two students with severe disabilities. One is a child with Down syndrome who has developmental disabilities; he has severe delays in the acquisition of cognitive, language, motor, and social skills, and he has some severe learning problems. The other child has normal intelligence but is nonambulatory, with limited speech and severe cerebral palsy. “You will be assigned a full-time aide with a special education background. In addition, Bill Gregg, the inclusion specialist,

will assist you with instructional plans and strategies. It is important that you prepare your students and the parents so that a smooth transition can be made when these students come into your class in January, just two and a half months from now. I’d like you and Bill to map out a plan of action and give it to me in 2 weeks.”

#### Reflect

1. What should Lupe and Bill’s plan of action include?
2. What is the purpose of integrating students with severe disabilities with students without disabilities in the same classroom?
3. In what ways will Ms. Gutierrez have to prepare her current students to effectively integrate her new students?
4. How might the classroom environment and curriculum be affected when a student with severe disabilities is integrated into a general education classroom?

## Critical Incidents in Teaching

This feature presents both real-life and hypothetical situations that occur in schools or classrooms. The feature and discussion questions provide readers with the opportunity to examine their feelings, attitudes, and possible actions or reactions to each scenario.

### Critical Incidents in Teaching

#### Celebrating Ethnic Holidays

Esther Greenberg is a teacher in an alternative education class. Ms. Greenberg's college roommate was Chinese American, and she remembers fondly her visit to her roommate's home during the Lunar New Year. During that holiday, the parents and other Chinese adults gave all the children, including her, money wrapped in red paper, which was to bring all the recipients good luck in the New Year. Ms. Greenberg thought it would be a nice gesture to give the students in her class the red paper envelopes as an observance of the upcoming Lunar New Year. Since she was unable to give the students money, she wrapped gold-foil-covered chocolate coins (given to Jewish children) in red paper to give to her students.

Unfortunately, on the day of Lunar New Year, a number of students were pulled out of class for a special event-planning session. Most of the remaining students were Asian American students. When she passed out the red envelopes, the students were surprised and touched by her sensitivity to a cherished custom.

When her principal heard what Ms. Greenberg had done, he accused her of favoritism to the Asian American students and of deliberately leaving out the African American and White students.

When she tried to convince him otherwise, he responded that she had no right to impose Asian customs on her students. She responded that this was an important Asian custom of which students should be aware. However, he continued his attack, saying that this was Asian superstition bordering on a religious observance, and students should not be participating in such activities.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. Were Esther Greenberg's actions inappropriate for a public school classroom? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. When Ms. Greenberg learned that a large number of students were going to be absent from class, what should she have done with the red envelopes? Did her actions create an appearance of favoritism to one ethnic group over others? How could she have handled the situation to make it a pleasant experience for all of the students?
3. Why may the principal have been so upset about Ms. Greenberg's actions?

## Explore and Focus Your Cultural Lens

This feature presents a controversial school issue with *for* and *against* statements for readers to consider. New self-reflective questions as well as end-feature questions guide readers to reflect on their own attitudes and biases towards the topics covered in the features and to critically analyze both sides of the issue, encouraging them to take a side and clearly articulate their reasons for their choice.

### Explore and Focus Your Cultural Lens

#### Debate: Do You Think Sexual Orientation Should Be Incorporated into the Curriculum of the Nation's Schools?

Educators are struggling with how best to incorporate sexual orientation into the curriculum, eliminate bullying based on sexual orientation, and provide support for their LGBTQI+ students. Although the population is becoming more accepting of LGBTQI+, not all communities are supportive of the recognition of sexual orientation in their schools. In fact, some parents and religious leaders actively fight against any discussion of it at any grade level except in negative terms.

Concern about the inclusion of sexual orientation in the school curriculum has not been limited to the local school district level. State legislators may determine the content that should be taught about gay people in schools and at what age. Some states have passed legislation to ban any discussion of sexual orientation in their schools. You are likely to have one or more LGBTQI+ students in your classroom even though you may not know it. You will need to figure out how you can provide accurate and non-biased information about LGBTQI+ people as necessary. How you incorporate that information in the curriculum will depend, in part, on the context of the community in which you are teaching. Do you think sexual orientation should be incorporated into the curriculum of the nation's schools? Why or why not? What do you think the impact would be of including or excluding LGBTQI+ people, history, and issues in the curriculum?

#### FOR

- LGBTQI+ students should see themselves in the curriculum to help them develop positive identities.
- Children and youth at all ages should be taught to be accepting of others, including individuals whose sexual identity is not heterosexual.

- Young children should learn that families are very diverse, including some with same-sex parents.
- Bullying against LGBTQI+ students could be greatly reduced with curricula that incorporate LGBTQI+ content.

#### AGAINST

- Discussion of sexual orientation in the curriculum will encourage more students to become LGBTQI+.
- Students at all levels should learn the gender roles that are appropriate for their sex.
- Introducing positive images of same-sex couples and LGBTQI+ people will lead students to think it is acceptable to be LGBTQI+, which is an inappropriate role for schools.
- Students should learn that bullying against any student is inappropriate without pointing out the disproportionate bullying of LGBTQI+ students.

#### Questions for Discussion

1. How would you respond to the question of whether sexual orientation should be incorporated into the curriculum of the nation's schools? What rationales support your response?
2. How will you know whether the community in which you are teaching is supportive of the inclusion of sexual orientation issues, history, and experiences in the curriculum?
3. If you are teaching in a very conservative community, what strategies would be appropriate in providing support for LGBTQI+ students in the school?

## Revisiting the Opening Case Study

This feature brings students back to the chapter-opening case study, now with the knowledge and strategies they have gleaned from the chapter. The feature questions challenge students to apply chapter concepts to the issues presented in the case and charge readers to think about the implications of the issues for their own teaching practice.

### Revisiting the Opening Case Study

After initially not receiving permission to start a GSA, Amy, André, other LGBTQI+, and their allies were allowed to start the GSA after they submitted a legal opinion that reminded the principal and school board that the Equal Access Act of 1984 granted them a right to establish the club. They started an anti-bullying campaign and sponsored an ally week in which students were asked to sign a pledge not to bully. Two hundred students signed the pledge. They also organized several charitable activities in the community, including collecting food to share with low-income families during the holidays and tutoring homeless elementary students. They had asked speakers to meet with them at several of their monthly meetings to discuss LGBTQI+ issues and history. They were making progress at making their school safer and were becoming better informed about the issues. They were planning to make contacts with some local and state politicians about making schools more inclusive and overturning legislation that prevented positive discussion of LGBTQI+ issues in the curriculum.

The students who started the club were still enthusiastic about their agenda. Even though the community was very conservative, 30 parents had signed the permission form for their children to be members. Other students were allowed to visit meetings, and an average of 20 students were regularly attending meeting.

Ms. Hall planned to talk with the members about inviting the only openly gay teacher in the school to serve as a co-advisor. They all believed their work would make a difference in the acceptance of LGBTQI+ students in the school. The importance of a GSA was stressed by the president of a club in another school: "When I first moved to Nixa, I was spit on, pushed around, and called names. In the beginning, students started a petition to try to stop our club. We stood firm and strong and are now one of the largest student organizations at our school" (as cited in Sadowski, 2016, p. 65). You too can support students who are fighting for the civil rights of LGBTQI+ and other students.

#### Reflect and Apply

1. What is the value of a GSA, especially in a community that is very conservative?
2. Why would you or why wouldn't you post a safe place or safe zone sticker or poster on the door to your classroom?
3. What do you think is the most important activity that was undertaken by the GSA that Ms. Hall advised? Why do you think it was important?

## Why Study Multicultural Education?

The United States is one of the most multicultural nations in the world. The population includes indigenous peoples—American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Hawaiians—and others who themselves or their ancestors arrived as immigrants from other countries. Our students bring their unique ethnicities, races, socioeconomic statuses, religions, and native languages to the classroom. They differ in gender identity, sexual orientation, age, and physical and mental abilities. Many students have come from different parts of the world and have different experiences based on the communities in which they have grown up. As we move further into this century, the population will become increasingly more diverse. Children of color already comprise just over half of the school-aged population, and this percentage will continue to grow over time.

The culture and the society of the United States are dynamic and in a continuous state of change. Understanding the impact of race, class, gender, and other group memberships on your students' lives and on your own life will make you a more effective teacher. Education that is multicultural provides an environment that values diversity and portrays it positively. Students are valued regardless of their membership in different cultural groups. We should have high expectations for all of our students and both encourage and

support them in meeting their educational and vocational potentials. To deliver multicultural education, we must develop instructional strategies that build on the cultures of our students and their communities. We must make the curriculum authentic and meaningful to students to engage them in learning. Making the curriculum multicultural helps students and teachers think critically about institutional racism, classism, sexism, ableism, ageism, and heterosexism as they work for equity in the classroom.

## Instructor Resources

The following resources are available for instructors to download on [www.pearsonhighered.com/educators](http://www.pearsonhighered.com/educators). Instructors enter the author or title of this book, select the eleventh edition of the book, and then click on the “Resources” tab to log in and download textbook supplements.

### **Instructor’s Resource Manual and Test Bank (0135787262)**

The Instructor’s Resource Manual and Test Bank includes an overview of chapter content and related instructional activities for the college classroom and for practice in the field as well as a robust collection of chapter-by-chapter test items. Discussion Questions and Portfolio Activities found in earlier editions have been moved to the Instructor’s Resource Manual.

### **PowerPoint™ Slides (0135787211)**

The PowerPoint™ slides include key concept summarizations. They are designed to help students understand, organize, and reinforce core concepts and theories.

### **TestGen (0135786991)**

TestGen is a powerful test generator available exclusively from Pearson Education publishers. You install TestGen on your personal computer (Windows or Macintosh) and create your own tests for classroom testing and for other specialized delivery options, such as over a local area network or on the Web. A test bank, which is also called a Test Item File (TIF), typically contains a large set of test items, organized by chapter and ready for your use in creating a test, based on the associated textbook material. Assessments may be created for both print and testing online.

Tests can be downloaded in the following formats:

- TestGen Testbank file – PC
- TestGen Testbank file – MAC
- TestGen Testbank – Blackboard 9 TIF
- TestGen Testbank – Blackboard CE/Vista (WebCT) TIF
- Angel Test Bank (zip)
- D2L Test Bank (zip)
- Moodle Test Bank
- Sakai Test Bank (zip)

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# Chapter 1

# Foundations of Multicultural Education



## Learning Outcomes

*As you read this chapter, you should be able to:*

- 1.1** Understand the diversity of students in schools across the United States and recognize the importance of respecting the diversity of students and their families.
- 1.2** Describe the role that culture plays in the lives of students and how you can build on their cultures to support their social and emotional development as well as their academic learning.
- 1.3** Consider different ideologies for integrating diverse cultural groups into the United States over the past century and identify the ideologies that address diversity.
- 1.4** Analyze the differences between meritocracy, equality, and social justice and describe how they are applied in schools.
- 1.5** Identify obstacles to creating a just and equal classroom and analyze strategies for overcoming them.
- 1.6** Describe characteristics of multicultural education and evaluate the importance of multicultural education for all students.

## Opening Case Study

Sarah Clarke's seventh graders were enthusiastic about starting school. Several of them were new to the school and new to the United States. They were learning a new language—in a new country, with a new teacher, and with new classmates. The first language of more than one-third of the school's student population was a language other than English. Throughout the school district, more than 50 languages were spoken by students who had come from countries in Africa, Asia, Central America, and South America.

Ms. Clarke was excited about having such a diverse classroom. She knew that the African American and European American students in her class spoke only English. Because she was bilingual in Spanish and English, she was looking

forward to being able to use both languages as she worked with the students whose parents had immigrated from Mexico and Central America. She had not realized that her class would include a student from Iraq whose family had recently been in a refugee camp. She had already googled for more information on the languages and cultures of Iraq, but she wondered how she would communicate with the parents of this student if they did not speak English.

During the orientation for new teachers, Ms. Clarke was reminded that nearly half of the students at the school were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch because their families' incomes were below or just above the poverty level. She was thinking about

*(continued)*

the teaching strategies that would be most effective for this diverse group of students. She knew that she would need to differentiate her lessons to ensure that all of the students were learning and not falling behind academically. She knew that meeting that goal could be challenging, but she felt lucky to be teaching in a suburban school that valued diversity.

## Reflect

1. What are some of the reasons that Ms. Clarke is excited about having a diverse student population in her classroom?

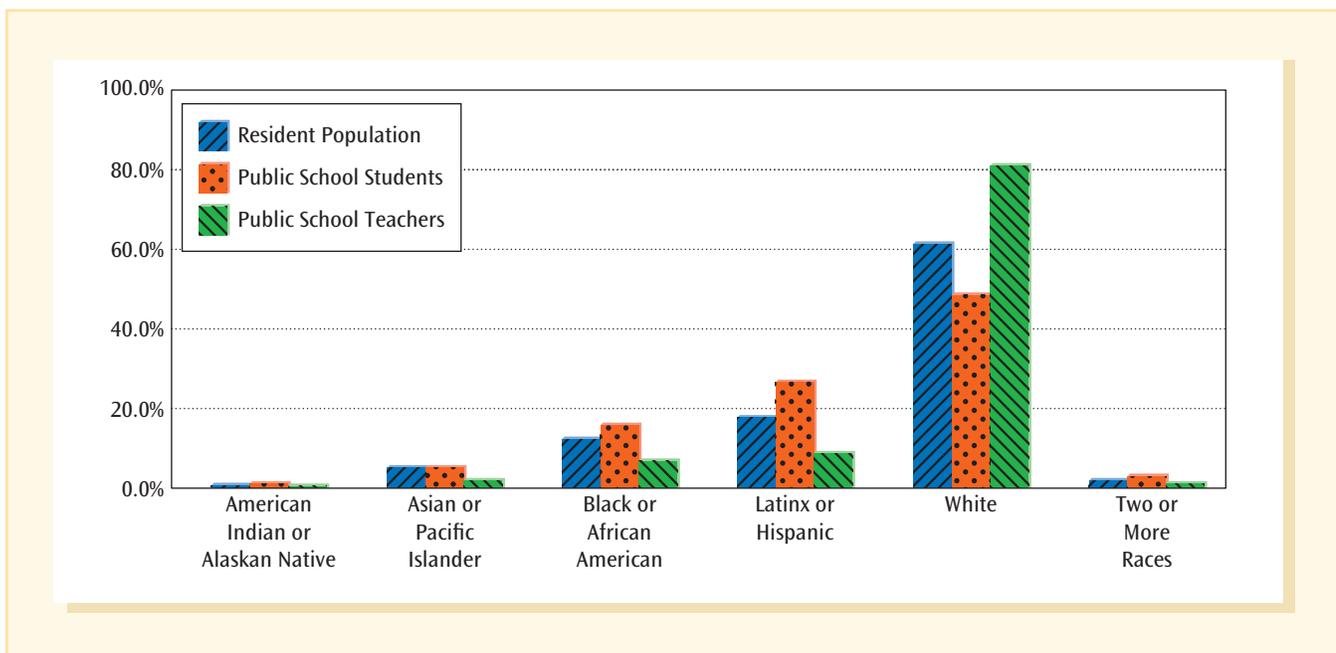
2. What are some of the challenges Ms. Clarke is likely to confront in her goal for all of her students to be at grade level by the end of the year?
3. What do you wish you had learned in your teacher preparation program to help you be a more effective teacher of English language learners from diverse countries of origin?

## Student Diversity and the Importance of Respecting Diversity in the Classroom

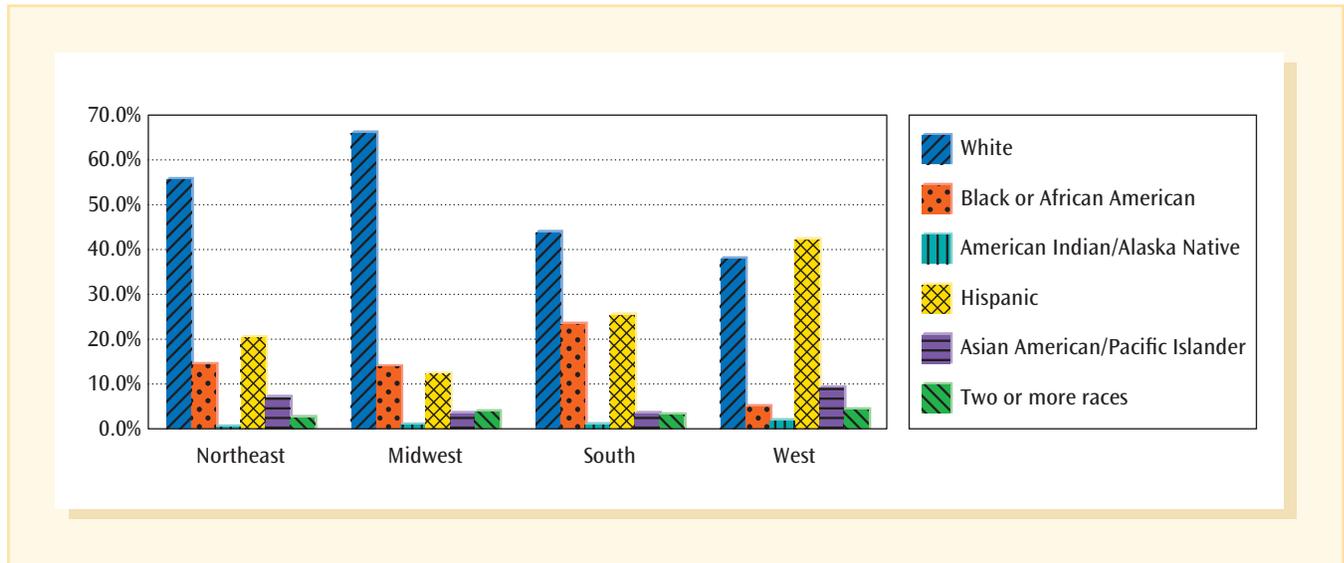
The student population in U.S. schools is very diverse, with **students of color** now accounting for more than half of the students. The majority of the U.S. population will also be people of color before 2050 with the largest increases being **Latinx** and Asian Americans. Today's media coverage might lead you to believe that the general population does not value the country's diversity. However, a recent poll by the Pew Research Center found that six in ten U.S. adults believe that the growing racial and ethnic diversity makes the country a better place to live. Fewer than one in ten say that it makes the country a less desirable place to live. Others say that diversity doesn't make much difference in their attitudes about the desirability of living in the United States (Fingerhut, 2018).

The racial and ethnic diversity in schools is projected to continue to expand. By 2027, students of color are projected to account for 55% of the elementary and secondary public school populations (Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2019). However, the race and gender of their teachers match neither the student population nor the general population, as shown in Figure 1.1: 80% of the teachers are White, and 77% are female (McFarland et al., 2018).

**Figure 1.1** Pan-Ethnic and Racial Diversity of K–12 Teachers and Students in 2016



**SOURCE:** National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). Most current digest tables. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/current\\_tables.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/current_tables.asp)

**Figure 1.2** Percentage of Public Elementary and Secondary School Students by Region and Ethnicity/Race in 2015

**SOURCE:** National Center for Education Statistics. (2018). Most current digest tables. Retrieved from [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/current\\_tables.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/current_tables.asp)

The racial and ethnic diversity in public schools differs greatly from region to region, as shown in Figure 1.2, and from state to state within the region. Students of color account for more than half of the student population in western and southern states. More than 40% of the public school students in western states are Latinx, and 9% are Asian American or Pacific Islander. Nearly 25% of the public school students in southern states are African American. Schools in midwestern states are the least diverse, with only one in three students being a student of color. Students of color are the majority in most of the nation's largest school districts, comprising 70% of the student population in cities with a population over 100,000 as compared to 49% in suburban areas, 36% in towns, and 29% in rural areas (Snyder et al., 2019). This ethnic diversity includes the children of recent immigrants, who may speak a language other than English at home, requiring schools to make available programs that help students learn both the subjects being taught and English.

The United States is not only multiethnic; it is also a nation of diverse religious beliefs. Immigrants from around the globe have brought with them religions that are unfamiliar to many U.S. citizens. While small groups of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Sikhs have been in the country for many decades, they became more highly visible as conflicts in the Middle East expanded over the past three decades. Even Christians from Russia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, and Egypt bring their own brands of worship to denominations that have strong roots in this country.

Diverse religious beliefs can raise challenges for educators in some communities. The holidays to be celebrated must be considered, along with religious codes related to the **curriculum**, school lunches, interactions of boys and girls, and student clothing. Immigrant parents generally value education for their children, but they do not always agree with the school's approaches to teaching and learning or accept the public school's **secular values** as being appropriate for their families. Working collaboratively with parents and communities is an important step in providing an equitable education to all students.

Another important aspect of diversity that has an impact on schools is the economic level of students' families, especially as the gap in income and wealth among families increases, leading to a smaller middle class and a larger proportion of the population being unable to provide basic needs for their families even when working full-time. Although the U.S. Census Bureau reports that 12.3% of the U.S. population had incomes below the poverty level in 2017, 17.5% of U.S. children live below the official poverty

level (Fontenot, Semega, & Kollar, 2018). The percentage of public school students who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch programs because their families are below or near the poverty level increased from 38% in the 2000–01 school year to 52% in 2015–16 (Snyder et al., 2019). Nearly one in five students attend a **high poverty school** in which more than 75% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. Forty-five percent of African American students, 45% of Latinx students, 37% of American Indian/Alaska Native students, and 25% of Pacific Islander students were attending these high poverty schools in 2015–16 (McFarland et al., 2018).

During your teaching career, you are likely to have one or more students with disabilities in your classroom. Depending on the disability, modifications in the curriculum or environment will be needed to provide students with disabilities the opportunity to learn at the same level as other students. The goal is to provide all students the **least restrictive environment** so that they can learn with peers who do not have a recognized disability. The number of students with disabilities who are being served by special programs increased from 3.7 million in the 1976–77 school year to 6.7 million, or 13.2% of the school population, in the 2015–16 school year (Snyder et al., 2019).

Some of your students will be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or other gender nonconforming person (LGBTQI+). Some students will be questioning where they fit along the gender continuum between maleness and femaleness. Their gender and sexual identity can impact how they see themselves and how others view and treat them.

Being aware and knowledgeable of the diversity of your students is one way to show respect for them and their families. Understanding the community in which the school is located will be very helpful in developing effective instructional strategies that draw on the cultural background and experiences of students. You should help students affirm their own **cultures** with an understanding that people across cultures share many similarities. In addition, students should become aware of cultural differences and inequalities in the United States and in the world.

Teachers will find that students have individual differences, even though they may appear to be from the same cultural groups. These differences extend far beyond intellectual and physical abilities. Students bring to the classroom different historical and cultural backgrounds, religious beliefs, and day-to-day experiences that influence the way they behave in school. The cultures of some students will be mirrored in the school culture. The differences between home and school cultures for **others** will cause dissonance unless the teacher can accept and respect students' cultures, integrate their cultures into the curriculum, and develop a supportive environment for learning. If the teacher fails to understand the cultural factors that affect student learning and behavior, it will be difficult to help all students learn.

**Multicultural education** is an educational construct in which students' cultures are integrated into the curriculum, instruction, and classroom and school environment. It supports and extends the concepts of culture, diversity, **equality**, **social justice**, and **democracy** into the school setting. An examination of these concepts and their practical applications in schools is a first step in creating a classroom that is multicultural.



### MyLab Education Video Example 1.1

In this video, teachers discuss the importance of developing cultural competence to interact effectively with students and families from diverse groups. What is the rationale behind the importance of incorporating linguistic diversity of students into the curriculum? What strategies could you use in your lessons?

### MyLab Education Self-Check 1.1

## The Role of Culture in Students' Lives and Building on It in the Classroom

Culture defines who we are. It is the way of life that we experience in our day-to-day living in a particular place at a particular time (Storey, 2018). It influences our knowledge, beliefs, and values. It provides the blueprint that determines the way we think, feel, perceive, and behave.

Generally accepted and patterned ways of behavior are necessary for a group of people to live together, and culture imposes order and meaning on our experiences. What appears as the natural and perhaps only way to learn and interact with others is determined by our culture. It allows us to predict how others of the same culture will behave in certain situations. Culturally determined norms provide the dos and don'ts of appropriate behavior in our culture. We are generally comfortable with others who share our culture because we know the meanings of their words and behaviors. In addition, we share the same language, history, religion, traditions, and diet.

Culture has such an impact on us that we fail to realize that not everyone shares our way of thinking and behaving. This may be, in part, because we have never been in cultural settings different from our own. This lack of knowledge may lead to our responding to differences as personal affronts rather than simply cultural differences. These misunderstandings may appear insignificant to an observer, but they can be important to participants. For example, our culture determines how loud is too loud, how late we may arrive at an event, and how close we can stand to another without being rude or disrespectful. Raising an eyebrow and gesturing with our hands have different meanings across groups; they may be acceptable and expected in one group and very offensive or rude in another group. Teachers may misinterpret the actions of their students if they do not share the same culture.

Our values are initially determined by our culture. They influence the importance of prestige, status, pride, family loyalty, love of country, religious belief, and honor. Our nonverbal communication patterns reflect our culture and may be misinterpreted by other group members. Culture also determines our manner of walking, sitting, standing, reclining, gesturing, and dancing. Language is an important part of our culture and provides a special way of looking at the world and organizing experiences that is often lost in translating words from one language to another. Many different sounds and combinations of sounds are used in the languages of different cultures. Those of us who have tried to learn a second language may have experienced difficulty verbalizing sounds that were not part of our first language. Also, diverse language patterns found

## Critical Incidents in Teaching

### Celebrating Ethnic Holidays

Esther Greenberg is a teacher in an alternative education class. Ms. Greenberg's college roommate was Chinese American, and she remembers fondly her visit to her roommate's home during the Lunar New Year. During that holiday, the parents and other Chinese adults gave all the children, including her, money wrapped in red paper, which was to bring all the recipients good luck in the New Year. Ms. Greenberg thought it would be a nice gesture to give the students in her class the red paper envelopes as an observance of the upcoming Lunar New Year. Since she was unable to give the students money, she wrapped gold-foil-covered chocolate coins (given to Jewish children) in red paper to give to her students.

Unfortunately, on the day of Lunar New Year, a number of students were pulled out of class for a special event-planning session. Most of the remaining students were Asian American students. When she passed out the red envelopes, the students were surprised and touched by her sensitivity to a cherished custom.

When her principal heard what Ms. Greenberg had done, he accused her of favoritism to the Asian American students and of deliberately leaving out the African American and White students.

When she tried to convince him otherwise, he responded that she had no right to impose Asian customs on her students. She responded that this was an important Asian custom of which students should be aware. However, he continued his attack, saying that this was Asian superstition bordering on a religious observance, and students should not be participating in such activities.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Were Esther Greenberg's actions inappropriate for a public school classroom? If so, why? If not, why not?
2. When Ms. Greenberg learned that a large number of students were going to be absent from class, what should she have done with the red envelopes? Did her actions create an appearance of favoritism of one ethnic group over others? How could she have handled the situation to make it a pleasant experience for all of the students?
3. Why may the principal have been so upset about Ms. Greenberg's actions?



### MyLab Education Video Example 1.2

In this video, educators focus on the cultural cues that can be misunderstood by members of differing cultures. What classroom practices may alienate students? What classroom guiding principles could you create that foster inclusivity?

within the same language group can lead to misunderstandings when, for example, one person's joking may be heard by others as serious criticism or abuse of **power**.

Because culture is so internalized, we tend to confuse biological and cultural heritage. For example, we may identify ourselves as male, but the meaning of masculinity is determined by our culture. Vietnamese infants adopted by Italian American, Catholic, middle-class parents will share a cultural heritage with their adopted family. Observers, however, may continue to identify these children as Vietnamese Americans because of their physical characteristics. Parents from different ethnic, racial, and religious groups than their children may purposefully encourage their children to be bicultural, learning the cultures of the two groups to which they belong.

## Characteristics of Culture

Culture is learned, shared, and dynamic. We learn our culture from the people who are closest to us—our parents or caretakers, other family members, our peers, and our religious leaders. The ways that we were held, fed, bathed, dressed, and talked to as babies are culturally determined and begin the process of learning our family's culture. Culture affects not only how we dress, what we eat, and how we speak but also what we think and our worldview. The learning process continues throughout our lives as we interact with members of our own and other cultures.

Shared cultural patterns and customs bind people together as an identifiable group and make it possible for them to live together and function with ease. The shared culture provides us with the context for identifying with a particular group. Although there may be some disagreement about certain aspects of the culture, there is a common acceptance and agreement about most aspects. Actually, most points of agreement are outside our realm of awareness. For example, we may not realize that the way we communicate with each other and the way we raise children are culturally determined. Not until we begin participating in a second culture do we recognize differences among cultural groups.

Culture is dynamic, not static. Think about how your ethnic culture has changed from the time that your first family members immigrated to the United States or, if your family has been in the United States for a long time, how it differs from the national and ethnic cultures of the countries from which your ancestors came. If you are a First American, think about how your culture has changed as a result of politics and power that may have led to reloca-

tion as well as the battles your ancestors fought to retain your culture. Think about how female cultures changed as more and more women entered the workforce and continued to work after they were married and had children. Cultures change as they interact with other cultural groups, adopting characteristics of other cultures when it makes sense for their members. These changes can occur within the same families and across generations. In some Asian groups, especially Chinese families, three generations may live under one roof. The grandparents may be very slow in adapting to their new U.S. culture; the parents may be in the middle of moving into the mainstream U.S. culture while the children are already speaking and acting like members of the dominant U.S. culture. Working with these multigenerational families may be a challenge for educators.



Our cultures adapt to the environments in which we live and work. While the environment in rural areas is characterized by space and clean air, urban dwellers adapt to smog, crowds, and public transportation.

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Some cultures undergo constant and rapid change; others are very slow to change. Some changes, such as a new word or a new hairstyle, are relatively minor and have little impact on the culture as a whole. Other changes have a dramatic impact on cultures, altering traditional customs and beliefs. For example, cultures change as technology, social and other media, economic growth and decline, and climate change impact the lives of their members. Think about the impact on culture that resulted after the internet and the