

Reshaping the Curriculum

6. Reshaping the Curriculum

"[Schools must] take a serious look at their curriculum, pedagogy, retention and tracking policies, testing, hiring practices, and all the other policies and practices that create a school climate that is either empowering or disempowering for those who work and learn there."

-- Sonia Nieto (*)

WHAT

The curriculum should be integrated, interdisciplinary, meaningful, and student-centered. It should include issues and topics related to the students' background and culture. It should challenge the students to develop higher-order knowledge and skills (Villegas, 1991).

WHY

Integrating the various disciplines of a curriculum facilitates the acquisition of new knowledge (Hollins, 1996). Students' strengths in one subject area will support new learning in another. Likewise, by using the students' personal experiences to develop new skills and knowledge, teachers make meaningful connections between school and real-life situations (Padron, Waxman, & Rivera, 2002).

HOW

1. Use resources other than textbooks for study
 - Have students research aspects of a topic within their community
 - Encourage students to interview members of their community who have knowledge of the topic they are studying
 - Provide information to the students on alternative viewpoints or beliefs of a topic
2. Develop learning activities that are more reflective of students' backgrounds
 - Include cooperative learning strategies
 - Allow students the choice of working alone or in groups on certain projects
3. Develop integrated units around universal themes

References

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- Villegas, A. M. (1991). *Culturally responsive pedagogy for the 1990's and beyond*. Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education.

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