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October 1999

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Paradigm Shifts for Educators and Learners

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“This inquiry explores the methods/behaviors that effectively motivate teachers toward ethnic awareness and the positive impact that can be expected in high school student populations as a result of shifting from ethnic stereotyping and racism to cultural sensitivity and celebration of diversity.”

Our American society has different values, hopes and ideas. But as a whole everyone seems to be in agreement that everyone can be successful. And in order to be successful, everyone believes that you need a strong educational base. We think, then, that it would be fair to say that everyone values education to achieve success. There is no boundary for wanting to achieve but, sometimes, we as educators build hurdles that are just too high for our students to clearly see success. This may be because we fully don't understand our students.

We represent a part of minority within our school staff, in which we felt through our professional view and experiences, there is an underlying stream of concern dealing with racism and minimal effort of cultural awareness within the high school setting. We are hoping to effectively motivate teachers toward ethnic awareness and what positive impact can be expected in the high school student populations as a result of shifting from ethnic stereotyping and racism to cultural sensitivity and celebration of diversity. In doing so, we hope to develop an awareness of unity among students and teachers and students and other students.

Given the diversity of culture, this inquiry proposes to study what methods/behaviors can effectively motivate teachers toward ethnic awareness and what positive impact can be expected in the high school student populations as a result of shifting from ethnic stereotyping and racism to cultural sensitivity and celebration of diversity. It is intended that the participants would benefit when faculties understand and accept key elements of diversity in the high school culture; they will more effectively interact with each other and with student majority /minority people and issues.

Initially, administrators, students, teachers and parents were asked to participate in surveys. This followed with administrators, teachers and students being asked to partake in focus group interviews twice. With data collected from surveys and interviews, it would be determined if there truly were a concern of racism or cultural unawareness in this mid-western metropolitan high school.

With data supporting our initial belief, we will show how we verified our initial instinctive thought that there was a problem dealing with diversity and equity existing at a mid-western United States metropolitan high school. We will show you examples of what we found, through our research, that will display students' and faculty reaction and response in a form of how people answered surveys and focus group questions. The findings will also show the positive resolutions that are being instilled to bring together

the separated and divided high school student and faculty body.

In conclusion, we don't think anyone will resolve the issue of racism, but we hope to certainly make a change for the better in the school that we work at and the people we associate with. Our goal is that as educators, we need to begin understanding our students as whole persons. Teachers never stop teaching and learning. If you reach the point of where you believe that you have done all you can, you have become like many teachers who are ineffective. Students are never a finished product. Educators will need to become more flexible, more understanding and more creative. We will always have to gain a better understanding in order to help our students be successful. We need to reach out to find their strengths and weaknesses. The way we reach these different students may take creativity and a first step by the educator. We can still challenge all of our students and still let everyone be successful. We need to challenge ourselves. This may only be accomplished by shifting our paradigms.

PRESENTERS:

Ashok Surender is a graduate student at Wichita State University in Curriculum and Instruction. He is currently teaching in a Kansas metropolitan community. He is originally from India and has lived in the US for the past 29 years. He has lived predominately in the mid-western part of the United States. He received his B.S. in Education Degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1989. He currently serves as the Special Education Department Chairman at his 6A high school. He has taught students of special needs for the past decade. The students' exceptionalities were from a range of profoundly handicapped to mildly handicapped. He also served as a coach in several sports: Assistant Coach for Men's Soccer, assistant coach for Men and Women's Basketball, head coach for Men and Women's Track and Assistant for Men's Baseball. He is also married and has a two-year-old daughter.

Bobby Bribiesca, an educator for over 26 years, has gained the respect of many of his colleagues for this outstanding commitment of assisting student growth through his dedication in teaching and coaching. Bribiesca has been married for 31 years and he has three daughters. He is currently teaching Movement Education at a Public High School with a student population of 1,560. He received his B.A. Degree in Physical Education from Wichita State University and is currently a graduate student in a Master's of Education Program in Curriculum and Instruction. Bribiesca has just completed 18 years as the head Varsity Soccer coach at his high school. Bobby's high school won a State Championship in 1995. He has developed numerous players who have continued playing soccer at the college and professional level. Throughout his coaching career, Bobby has been presented with several awards for his coaching and leadership in the sport of soccer.