

Talking About Diversity with Reading Recovery Colleagues In New Zealand

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Three Voices

The effects of diversity on
learning to read. . .

“Every child
is different”

“It depends
on your
definition of
diversity”

“It affects

literacy in
hundreds
of ways”



Colorblindness: Feagin calls the “colorblindness” a “sincere fiction” because Whites truly believe that their views are consistent with ideals of fairness and equity.

“I don’t see my students as Black, White, or Brown. They are all children who need my help.”

Issues Educators Associate with Diversity

- Language Structures
- Book Choice and Book Language
 - Vocabulary
 - Respect
- Expectations

“. . . it does matter who is being taught - the student. The student’s age, developmental level, race and ethnicity, physical and emotional states, prior experiences, interests, family and home life, learning preferences, attitudes about school, and a myriad of other variables influence the teaching and learning processes. . . It is mind-boggling and humbling to contemplate the complexities of this much -heralded precept of effective teaching [meeting the needs of children].” (Irvine, 2003, p. 47)

“Mainstream White students, like their African American peers, bring cultural beliefs, values, and perceptions to school. The difference between the school experiences and the success of the two groups is that the culture of middle-class White students is more

likely to be compatible with the culture of the school than the culture of African American students.” (Irvine, 2003, p. 6)

Advice from our NZ colleagues

Reading Recovery Teacher: We need to visit children’s communities.

Classroom Teacher: We can’t just bring our own background to our classrooms.

Reading Recovery Teacher: We must accept differences and recognize different beliefs and values.

Reading Recovery Tutor: We must recognize that all children are diverse; we need to recognize the abilities that all children bring.

Reading Recovery Tutor: We need to recognize their strengths and help them make links to school learning.

Classroom Teacher: We need to know where kids come from.

Principal: We need to know who they are.

Resources

To hear spoken Maori or to learn the language, go to:
<http://www.maorilanguage.net/alphabet/index.cfm>

Irvine, Jacqueline J. (2003). Educating teachers for diversity: Seeing with a cultural eye. New York: Teachers College Press.

This book explores many of the ideas presented in this talk through the voices of African American teachers and scholars. The book is written in a friendly voice and not too long. It presents insightful information in a non-threatening manner.