

Levels of Integration of Multicultural Content

A Brief Summary

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Level 1

The Contributions Approach

Focuses on heroes, holidays, and discrete cultural elements

In this approach, ethnic content is limited primarily to special days, weeks, and months related to ethnic events and celebrations. Cinco de Mayo, Martin Luther King's Birthday, and African American History Week are examples of ethnic days and weeks celebrated in the schools. During these celebrations, teachers involve students in lessons, experiences, and pageants related to the ethnic group being commemorated. When this approach is used, the class studies little or nothing about the ethnic group before or after the special event or occasion.

Level 2

The Additive Approach

Content, concepts, themes, and perspectives are added to curriculum without changing its structure.

The Additive Approach allows the teacher to put ethnic content into curriculum without restructuring it, a process that would take substantial time, effort, training, and rethinking of the curriculum and its purposes, nature, and goals. The additive approach can be the first phase in a transformative curriculum and to integrate in with ethnic content, perspectives, and frames of reference. However, this approach shares several disadvantages with the contributions approach. Its most important shortcoming is that it usually results in the viewing of ethnic content from the perspectives of mainstream historians, writers, artists, and scientists because it does not involve a restructuring of the curriculum.

Level 3

The Transformation Approach

The structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups. The Transformation approach changes the basic assumptions of the curriculum and enables students to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from several ethnic perspectives and points of view. The mainstream-centric perspective is one of only several perspectives from which issues, problems, concepts, and issues are viewed. It is neither possible nor desirable to view every issue, concept, event or problem from the point of view of the cultural, ethnic, and racial groups that were the most active participants in, or were most cogently influenced by, the even, issue, or concept being studied.

Level 4

The Social Action Approach

Students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to solve them. The Social Action Approach includes all the elements of the transformation approach but adds components that require students to make decisions and take actions related to the concept, issue, or problem studied in the unit. Major goals of instruction in this approach are to educate students for social criticism and social change and to teach them decision-making skills. To empower students and help them acquire political efficacy, the school must help them become reflective social critics and skilled participants in social change. The traditional goal of school has been to socialize students so they would accept unquestioningly the existing ideologies, institutions, and practices within society and the nation-state.