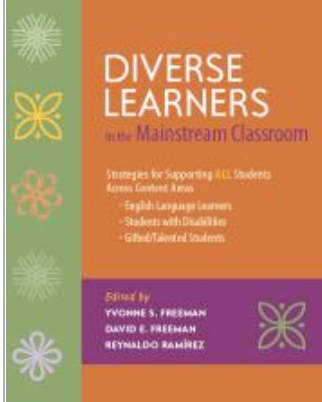


| Diverse Learners in the Mainstream Classroom:<br>Strategies for Supporting All Students Across Content Areas |   |              |
|--|---|--------------|
| <b>Author:</b>   | Yvonne S. Freeman, David E. Freeman & Reynaldo Ramirez, Eds. (2008) |              |
| <b>Publisher:</b>  | Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann   |              |
| <b>Pages</b>   | <b>ISBN</b>   | <b>Price</b> |
| ISBN 978-0-325-01313-8 (paper)   | Pp. xvi + 254   | \$36.25 U.S. |



*Diverse Learners in the Mainstream Classroom* is a very welcome addition to the field. This was no surprise to me. I have a high opinion of Yvonne and David Freeman. I use their book *Essential Linguistics for Teachers* in a graduate course on linguistics. Freeman and Freeman’s writing is clear, useful, and to the point. They write for teachers rather than academics. I plan on using this new book for a graduate course in cultural diversity. I like their newest effort because it encompasses cultural diversity beyond race, for example, English language learners (ELLs), students with disabilities, and gifted students. The book goes beyond merely giving information about diverse learners; the book provides methods teachers can use in a fully integrated classroom, including those students I just mentioned.

In Kansas, where I teach courses in Special Education and Teaching English to Speakers of Others Languages (TESOL), there has been a surge of interest among teachers in adding an ESOL endorsement to their teaching license. Most of these teachers are content area teachers: they do not plan to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) exclusively. There is often a mismatch between what these content teachers need to know and what they receive in ESL endorsement or certification courses. Unfortunately, the PRAXIS II English for Speakers of Other Languages exam required for endorsement does not cover content area strategies. It assumes that a teacher is or will be teaching only non-mainstream ESL classes. Course textbooks and instruction for prospective ESL teachers often assume the same. This is not accurate. Content area teachers need to know methods of teaching an array of diverse learners. The authors attempt to remedy this mismatch. Their book is focused on the needs of diverse learners including ELLs, students with

disabilities, and gifted students, a rather wide population. Fortunately, many of the methods and approaches suggested by Freeman, Freeman, and Ramirez, such as Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol (SIOP) or Multiple Intelligences, work well with all students.

According to Freeman, Freeman, and Ramirez, many otherwise well-prepared College of Education graduates report being overwhelmed by the diversity in their classrooms. Freeman and Freeman report that ELLs have increased by 60% since 1994 (p. 31). Students with disabilities have increased since the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) was enacted. Recognition and identification of some disabilities have skyrocketed: autism spectrum disorders, ADHD, and learning disabilities. The definition and qualifications for “giftedness” depend on each state, with some school districts allowing up to 20% of the school population to be eligible for gifted programs (Heward, 2008). If these gifted students are combined with students mainstreamed out of the ESL program (but who still need language support), students who have undiagnosed or borderline disabilities, and students who are just “slow learners,” the percentage of the student population receiving what might be called regular education shrinks still further. There is little “normal” in normal education.

Many education colleges offer a multiculturalism or diverse learners course to prepare teachers for today’s classrooms. Fort Hays State University’s Cultural Diversity course covers ethnic populations, English language learners, students with disabilities, and other examples of diverseness (e.g., religion), using critical pedagogy. Not all lay people, I suspect, immediately consider the wide range of diversity that might be included in a Cultural Diversity course, but to my mind cultural diversity is a very broad topic. I’ve said in class, “Everything is culture!” By that I mean a cultural influence: our meals—what we eat, how and when; clothing—what we wear and when; what we say and how we say it and to whom; as well as handling conflict; handling embarrassment; gestures; work; toilet habits; religious rituals; dating; and humor. There’s a lot to know—nobody knows everything about both macro and micro cultures—but what I stress to students is that cultural ignorance is usually acceptable, but cultural arrogance is not. In fact, showing an interest and willingness to learn in areas important to other people is a good way to establish rapport with them.

The authors compiled this book after they found existing books didn’t really address the wider population that they consider. They could have gone further and included ageism, religion, sexual orientation, and dialect differences; but adding these topics would greatly expand the book and are better suited to a huge tome such as a *Handbook of Diverse Learners*.

The book is organized as follows:

## **Part 1: Understanding Special Populations**

Chapter 1 – Cultural Diversity: Why It Matters in Schools and What Teachers Need to Know, by Luz A. Murillo and Patrick H. Smith

Chapter 2 – English Language Learners: Who Are They? How Can Teachers Support Them? by Yvonne S. Freeman and David E. Freeman

Chapter 3 – Bilingual Education, by Alma Dolores Rodriguez and Richard Gomez Jr.

Chapter 4 – Effective Practices for Students with Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms, by Steve Chamberlain

Chapter 5 – Personal Excellence: A New Paradigm for Gifted Education, by Darwin Nelson

## **Part 2: Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners**

Chapter 6 – Drawing on Multiple Intelligences to Teach Special Populations, by Kathy Bussert-Webb

Chapter 7 – Using Technology to Teach Diverse Populations, by Janice Wilson Butler

Chapter 8 – Diversity in Early Childhood, by Georgianna Duarte

Chapter 9 – Teaching Middle School Mathematics for All, by James A. Telese

Chapter 10 – Literacy in a Diverse Society, by Paula Parson and Renee Rubin

Chapter 11 – Understanding the Human Experience Through Social Studies, by Julio Noboa and Elsa Duarte-Noboa

Each chapter ends with application questions. For example, in chapter 2, the English Language Learner chapter, one question asks the reader to investigate how ELLs are identified and assessed in their local school district and whether the methods seem appropriate given concerns raised and information provided in the chapter. In chapter 11, application three is an assignment to evaluate world history textbooks, focusing on a representation of gender or ethnic group (e.g., Latinos/Latinas) in the textbook. After the applications key terms are then defined at the end of each chapter and an excellent list of Internet teacher resources follows.

It has to be noted that the editors have taken on quite a challenge. All groups of learners addressed by the contributors enlisted have had extensive literature written about them. One can specialize or even major in each of them in graduate programs. And although it is handy for us to have one small book that tries to synthesize strategies for each of these

groups, the task is a daunting one for a smallish book to pull off. But isn't a smallish book that students will read better than a daunting encyclopedia of categories of learners in mainstream classrooms? Also, this book shouldn't be considered the final word for students; certainly, in their other classes, students should learn content strategies that help all their present or future students.

A reader's favorite chapter may depend on his or her particular interests (e.g., early childhood education for teachers in that field). My favorite chapter was "Using Technology to Teach Diverse Populations." Chapter author Janice Wilson Butler gives many exciting suggestions for differentiating instruction: podcasts, wikis, blogs, twitter, mashups, Google apps, digital storytelling and social networking, all to help students complete projects.

This book leaves one wanting more, but it is not the fault of the book. Freeman, Freeman, and Ramirez's book can serve as an introduction and a resource for teachers.

## **References**

Heward, W. L. (2008). *Exceptional children: An introduction to special education* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.

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