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Reaching and Teaching Diverse Populations: Strategies for Moving Beyond Stereotypes			
Author:	Mary Bellucci Buckelew & Andrea Fishman (2011)		
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Adapting the scientific term “ecosystems” to an educational environment, Buckelew and Fishman design *Reaching and Teaching Diverse Populations: Strategies for Moving Beyond Stereotypes* as a guide for and about students and teachers as individuals. The handbook is structured into 40 strategies categorized either as Individual Identity and Self-Awareness; Multicultural Awareness and Intercultural Interaction; Introduction to Classroom Inquiry; or Analyzing Pedagogy for the Classroom Ecosystem.

The text allows you to apply general knowledge and beliefs of your own culture and contexts to enable you to see a multidimensional realm. It introduces and expands cultural awareness not just within the classroom setting but attempts to sustain community, workplace, home, and global perspectives. The strategies are comprised from entail at every educational level ranging from kindergarten to graduate and professional development. The strategies include rationale, step-by-step instructions, reflections, content-area extensions, and additional applications for varied use. It goes as far as to provide a quick strategy, reference source for users who may want to focus on specific topics within their classroom, rather ecosystem, such as age, gender, professional identity, class, even geography.

In the Individual Identity and Self-Awareness portion of the guide, Buckelew and Fishman began with individual influences, both cultural and social, in effort to expose and explore the

complex identities of individuals. This is considered a necessary step in building a successful and sustainable ecosystem classroom. One particular strategy required participants to brainstorm and categorize variables such as people, places, experiences, and things that are meaningful to them. These same variables were used to generate a poem entitled, “I Come From”. The rationale for such an activity expands the notion of diversity by acknowledging that everyone comes from somewhere specific, particular, different, and special. This strategy was also explained to heighten and build upon individual awareness and what they bring into the classroom, workplace, community, and/or professional development. This strategy would be ideal for introductory settings. It could also extend into the Language Arts curriculum strand by incorporating poetry elements. Another strategy within this section that focused on Individual Identity and Self-Awareness was entitled “Willing to Be Disturbed”. I highlight this strategy because it challenges individual perceptions and beliefs regarding racism, sexism, anti-Semitism, classism, socialism, and any other “ism”. It acknowledges the discomfort and suggests such disturbance is crucial to learning. Buckelew writes, “You need to know how these ideologies shape the sociopolitical landscape of American education. Equity, democracy, and anti-racist education are hallmarks of successful 21st-century teachers, classrooms, and schools.” In review of our history’s curriculum development, there is much merit and relevance in such perceptions and beliefs for they have shaped education and much more. Undoubtedly, this strategy intertwines and extends into the content-area of Social Studies. It can easily be incorporated into a unit on the Holocaust, the Civil War, or even the Civil Rights Movement, to name a few. The concepts in this strategy can make the disturbances explicit and legitimate using students’ own reactions as a basis for understanding history’s relevance to their lives.

The strategies noted in the second part of the book emphasize awareness in Multicultural Awareness and Intercultural Interaction. By making multicultural issues local and relevant, current and future teachers begin to see themselves as agents of change, creators of curriculum and pedagogy, and exciting learning environment. As the book advances, this portion of the guide requires student growth from individual awareness to the connection of others as individuals. Through transactions involving the home, classroom environment, and the community, the individual has experiences that react to each other. These transactions deal with both input and output and can be items such as race, religion, nationality, class, occupation, family status, ethnicity, and education.

A far too familiar rule or policy introduced when discussing classroom culture is respect. Therefore, it is not startling that Buckelew first multicultural and intercultural strategy in this area incorporated creating respect. Coming to a shared understanding of classroom guidelines and shared language of respect will benefit any environment by making visible what respect looks like, sounds like, and feels like in the classroom community. In this simple but pair-share and whole class discussion activity, students connect with examples among their community, school, and home that demonstrate respect. These same examples are expanded are used to discuss commonalities and differences and finally derive at what guidelines will be established for their classroom environment. For example, students routinely recognize talking while another is talking is disrespectful. Yet, how can the disrespect be addressed without offending? Students then established strategies and

consequences to use with students who forget the guidelines of respect. In one classroom, the students agreed that the phrase, “poise, dignity, and grace” would be directed at any students who were disrupting the learning environment. For example, if a student interrupted another student, the interrupted student might say, “Please have poise, dignity, and grace, John” This phrase becomes second nature for everyone and it’s not direct but a gentle way of reminding students. This strategy employs student value and is ideal for classroom management.

The book continues its strategies with high profile topics such as bullying and a term called “code switching” that involves knowledge of the appropriate language, behavior, or dress in particular contexts or cultures—a strategy that is rather significant in the mindset of many adolescents who care more about their peers’ perspective than their very own.

Once in the section on Classroom Inquiry and Implications for Practice, the book shifts to introducing students/participants to inquiry strategies and processes essential for building inclusive, beyond-stereotypes classroom communities. These two sections are catered more to soon-to-be professionals (educators) because it suggests utilizing various data collection and assessments to maintain that ecosystem.

Buckelew and Fishman’s *Reaching and Teaching Diverse Populations* is as diverse in audience appeal as its content. It provides rich, thought-provoking discussion to learn more about yourself and others around you--teacher, student, administrator, and family member, to community advocate. The book offers structured experiences that some, especially students do not think of, realize, plan, or extend to the magnitude of how it relates to someone who they are not related. Furthermore, it allows you to rethink your own perspectives as an educator to make your classroom an educational ecosystem that embraces and recognizes diversity for its splendors.

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