

Community Conversation: Supporting Diverse Student Population
Dec. 3, 2020

Question #1: Why is it important to embrace diversity in our community and in our schools?

Group Discussion:

- We lose so much when we don't include others.
- You lose so much by only having one viewpoint.
- There is definitely a benefit when you have more than one type of person in the conversation.
- What does diversity mean? There are so many different aspects: race, religion, learning, special needs, LGBTQ+
- Having all of the students as part of the conversation is so important.
- Our community is so diverse. That's part of why I love it.
- We should always include socio-economics as part of diversity.
- Embracing diversity as a multiplier -there aren't downsides to expanding our minds, thoughts and experiences.
- People grow as a result of diversity.
- Conversations I hear among little ones - they are so accepting of each other. They see color. They accept differences.
- It's an uncomfortable conversation, but I'm concerned some people aren't authentic about their feelings.
- I think it's difficult to be authentic when there isn't a relationship.
- Embracing means learning from others, unifying groups.
- Students would like a class to help understand one another.
- As a student, diversity has come a long way - it's just normal for us now. There's not enough of a push with the teachers and relationships. Some of us feel uncomfortable talking about our differences and experiences.
- Representation from staff - more diverse staff is something to aspire to.
- It's very important for minorities to feel accepted and valued. It's also important for the majority to understand their perspective.
- There are sometimes gaps between students and teachers in the way they communicate and live their lives because of cultural differences.
- In school, most of the curriculum is white history, white authors. We need to expand the horizon on curriculum.
- Special education students are also worth learning about. We need to help "gen ed" students learn how to communicate with the disability community.

Question #2: How do we best support the diverse makeup of our schools?

Group Discussion:

- Listening to the students - what can we do to help strengthen the relationships between students and teachers?
- It must make it so hard for students whose first language isn't English.
- I've been very impressed with teachers making classrooms a safe space.
- There have been challenges having a special needs child. Diversity is great, inclusion needs some work. How to really include a child with special needs. Just putting a student in a typical classroom isn't inclusion.
- Teachers need more training. It could help lessen the stress teachers have in the classroom.
- It's not easy to find a book with a person of color or a disability.

- Teachers needed strategies on how to have these conversations - how you answer questions. You can't perceive how people will take it, but you're in complete control of how you say it.
- Be respectful with what you say - it's very important as you build relationships.
- Administrators should be intentional about class placement.
- Start a group like courageous conversation luncheons at the high school or junior school level. Be intentional about getting to know one another and have guided conversations.
- Moving from identifying diversity to celebrating each other and our differences as strengths.
- In US History, the way we're taught about other cultures can be disrespectful to people from that country. Although bias may not start in the classroom, there is potential for it to grow in the classroom.
- Teachers need to be engaged with learning and being supportive of other cultures when teaching.
- Teachers need to be ok with having uncomfortable conversations - it's ok to talk about difficult topics for example, Black Lives Matters, and what it means. BLM doesn't mean we want to be superior. We just want to be equal.
- It's important to empower students how to be proactive, to understand one another to grow in empathy.
- There are a lot of ways we can improve upon how we teach history.
- Conversations kids are having amongst themselves are hurtful - how do you counter this? It's probably coming from home - it's a reflection on the community. How can we educate our kids so they can go out and educate their parents, grandparents and community?
- Can we take the VFW essay and put it towards diversity?
- There are opportunities to celebrate Lakota's diversity so the community knows and understands.
- Adults need to model how to have a respectful conversation.
- Kidds are the ones who are going to make the change and we need to hear from you.