

Multicultural Awareness Through Art

Jennifer Swenson

Concordia University, Nebraska

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Multicultural education promotes knowledge, caring, and action towards a more compassionate and just world and it begins with self as students perceive and experience the world differently based on personal background. Multicultural education starts with self and expands into the concept of others and students become able to engage in larger issues beyond self. Clemons (2005) points out that the key to multicultural education is to first understand personal heritage and to gain self-awareness.

Clemons discusses a higher education multicultural design project that was assigned to first semester, sophomore level interior design students. This project required students to research their family history and culture by exploring cultural patterns, symbolism, and color in order to create a rug inspired by their cultural heritage. Students were surprised to find that their cultures shaped their values and that there was such diversity in one class. They developed an appreciation for each other's differences (Clemons, 2005). The project "enhanced understanding of peers and use of multicultural information in subsequent studio design projects. A long-term impact involved the growth of their personal identity" (Clemons, p. 294, 2005).

My curriculum includes multicultural projects in which students learn about their own and their peers' cultural heritage. As the world becomes more globalized and America's classrooms continue to diversify, "It is obvious that educators must help students move beyond awareness of multicultural differences to application of knowledge with diverse groups" (Clemons p. 296, 2005). It is important that we teach our students to not only be tolerant of other cultures, but to instill a desire to understand, respect, and learn from our differences. A major theme in my classroom is that we all have various skills and abilities. When we combine our strengths, we can accomplish more together and we ever could have one our own merits.

References

Clemons, S. (2005). Developing multicultural awareness through designs based on family cultural heritage: Application, impact, and implications. *International Journal Of Art & Design Education, 24(3)*, 288-298.