



A RE-EVALUATION OF TEXTS TAUGHT IN HIGH SCHOOL ENGLISH CLASSROOMS: WHY A NEED FOR A CURRICULUM REBOOT IS NECESSARY



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Synopsis

I interviewed fourteen high school English teachers from ten school districts across Northeast Ohio to determine how they are working to increase the amount of representative literature in their classrooms. By looking at how teachers are currently incorporating diverse texts into their classrooms, as well as applying various educational theories, I give suggestions for creating a diverse curriculum that is rooted in anti-racist pedagogy and aims to sharpen students' literature comprehension and social literacy skills.

Classroom Application

Although the teachers in the classrooms I examine are working to increase the amount of racially diverse literature utilized in their courses, some of the classrooms examined in this study would benefit from what I call a 'Diversity Reboot,' or a re-evaluation of the canonical literature used in English courses statewide. My 'Diversity Reboot' is given in both 'small-scale' and 'large-scale' ways.

'Small-Scale' Integration

'Small-scale' integration is to be used as soon as possible, in independent classrooms, to increase representation and diversity in literature without making major changes to the standing curriculum.



Incorporate student surveys to learn about students' lived experiences and values.



Substitute classic literature for literature that is more representative and introduces similar themes and ideas.



Change the dialogue that is commonly used when analyzing literature to correct misrepresentations.

'Large-Scale' Integration

For a greater, more sustained decolonization effort and the integration of diversity on a 'large-scale,' educators need to consider a complete re-evaluation of their standard curriculum maps. Although this may not be immediately possible in some districts, 'large-scale' implementation ultimately should be the goal.

1

Educators need to make conscious efforts to decolonize their entire syllabus.

2

Departments need to re-evaluate and evolve their curriculum maps and work to employ anti-racist pedagogies .

3

Implement community-wide awareness events such as "Black Lives Matter at School."

Analysis

Throughout the interview process, it became apparent that some districts are continuously working to update their curriculum to ensure an inclusive and representative array of literature; however, some of the districts represented in my study are terribly stagnant and need to consider the disservice they are doing to their students as they continue to deny them a diverse curriculum. A serious conversation about curriculum reform needs to be had at every school district nationwide. Moreover, teachers need to be given the resources necessary to restructure their curriculum to be representative of the country's population. Each district should take steps to ensure their curriculum is authentically representative of a variety of cultures and identities.

Conclusion

As society changes, the curriculum taught in public schools needs to change as well, reflecting the needs of the students it serves. A serious conversation about curriculum reform needs to be had at every school district nationwide in order to ensure that our classrooms are a place that are promoting equal representation and are working to educate our students both in terms of writing and reading, but also cultural and social literacy skills. While the classic literary canon will always be held with high regard, it is time to incorporate other cultural identities into the canon, ensuring that a variety of authors, cultures, and backgrounds are represented in the curriculum.