

Resource/Assignment:

Exploring Cultural Diversity in Queens

Course:

EECE 311 – Children in Cultural Context II: Learning and Teaching

This course is offered by the Elementary and Early Childhood Education Department at Queens College and examines the major learning theories and general principles underlying effective instruction. Classroom structures and management, intelligence, learning styles, individual assessment, and the impact of culture and class will be explored. There is a field component that allows students the opportunity to observe, teach and then reflects on their experiences with children.

Description of the Resource/Assignment:

In this course, students will explore Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) and examine how it can be implemented effectively in classrooms. This assignment is designed to build foundational knowledge about the diverse cultural communities within Queens, NY, which will inform and support our study of CRP—its importance and practical application in grade schools.

The focus of the assignment is the rich diversity found across the seven educational districts of Queens. In class, we will begin by identifying these districts using maps and online resources. Students will form groups of 3–4 and select one district to investigate. Each group will research the various cultural communities represented in their district and choose one cultural group to explore in greater depth. We will aim to ensure that the widest possible range of cultural groups and districts is represented across the class.

Once groups have selected their district and cultural focus, they will conduct research that includes visiting the area where the cultural group is predominantly located. During their visits, students will observe, take photographs, engage with community members, and listen to music from the group. Each group will identify two songs featuring musical instruments that are significant or widely popular within that culture. They will research these songs and instruments to understand their cultural importance. Alternatively, students may choose to

focus on another culturally significant aspect—such as a person, place, or tradition—that holds meaning for the community.

Each group will create a PowerPoint presentation to teach the class about their selected cultural group. Together, we will compile the slides into a class e-book, which will serve as a resource for students' future teaching practice. In addition, we will create a shared playlist of the selected songs, offering an auditory connection to the cultures explored.

The overarching goal of this assignment is to help students meaningfully engage with the cultural identities of the communities they may one day serve as educators. In doing so, they will not only gain insight into others' lived experiences but also build a practical resource library that supports culturally responsive teaching.

Where Will the Assignment Be Enacted?

The assignment will begin in the classroom with an introduction to Queens' educational districts. Research will continue in the library and online. Students will also complete field visits to their selected districts and collaborate—on campus, in libraries, or virtually—to create their presentations. Final presentations and compilation will take place in class.

Learning Outcomes / Artifacts:

Students will produce two main artifacts:

1. A class e-book compiled from all group presentations, serving as a reference for culturally relevant teaching.
2. A curated playlist featuring songs from the various cultural groups explored during the assignment.

Pedagogies of Place:

Data show that many CUNY students remain in the city after graduation, with a large number of our teacher candidates becoming teachers within the NYC Department of Education. For this reason, it is critical that teacher candidates gain familiarity with the diverse populations they are likely to teach. To foster culturally relevant teaching practices, we must first provide

opportunities for teacher candidates to explore and learn from the cultural richness of their own city—especially within Queens, one of the most diverse boroughs in the world. However, the benefits of this assignment extend well beyond New York City. Regardless of where our students eventually teach—whether in urban, suburban, or rural settings—developing the skills to recognize, understand, and respond to cultural diversity is essential. The experience of deeply engaging with diverse communities prepares future educators to be adaptable, empathetic, and effective in any educational context. This assignment builds a foundation of inquiry, respect, and culturally responsive pedagogy that will serve teacher candidates throughout their professional lives.