

Assignment 1:
Self Reflection

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Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in STEM Education
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As in introduction to various aspects of myself that I identify with or that is culturally relevant to me, I would like to share a poem that I wrote for another class that's entitled "I am From". In this poem you will hopefully see a little snapshot as to how I was raised and my background as well.

"I am from..." poem

I am from a "gumbo" of ancestors

a mixture of cultures throughout

I am from questions of "What are you?"

and "Are you mixed with something?"

I am from immediate and extended families

where it's impossible to keep count

I am from a strong Catholic background

where it's a sin to miss out

I am from overly religious grands

who are extremely devout

I am from home cooked meals and hand sewn clothes

and being the envy of those who were without

I am from hard workers who are dedicated to their craft

and never stop until their last breath

I am from hugs and kisses

and acknowledging my elders in the room

I am from strong, intelligent, and independent humans

who always know just the right things to do

I am from love and pride

depression and pain

I am from loveless romantic relationships

and living in vain.....

I am an African American Creole from Southern Louisiana and if you have any idea of the culture here it is definitely a mixture of various ethnicities. Our culture is very mixed and very diverse. There is a heavily influenced French culture here, as well as Spanish, even though many of us do not speak French as a first language here anymore. Culture, traditions and hard work were instilled and passed along the lineage and bloodlines of the families that were born and raised here, my family especially. My immediate family has many educators working in various positions so naturally education was very important to me. There was never a question or acceptance of failure and we were expected to work hard, be well behaved and excel beyond our own expectations. Always striving to do better than the generation before us but never forgetting the rich history that we came from. Even though I come from such a diverse background with everyone looking different from one another, I always understood that I was African American (Black) and that is exactly how society would always see me as well. Did it matter that my

grandmother and her siblings looked just as Caucasian as the families that they worked for? No, not at all. It was understood and known who a member of the minority community was and who was not. Most people from other states can't tell the difference but here in the south it's obvious who is who. Over time of course I have come to accept who I am and my position in society proudly. As an educator I can empathize and relate to the students that I teach. I know the importance of seeing ourselves in STEM and how there is a void in these important fields of study. I know what it feels like to be judged automatically by the color of my skin or what area of town I live in. I love working in the inner-city schools because I feel that is where the biggest differences have been made and thankfully I can proudly say I have been a part of some the advancements that my students have made.

Part 2: STEM Learning History

My earliest memory of a STEM discipline comes from middle school. Science and Math were my most intriguing subjects that I loved but never thought I was influenced enough to pursue it as a career. Honestly, it wasn't until I was in the eleventh grade that I KNEW STEM was for me and my always love. Chemistry class to be exact. I had an incredible teacher who was so passionate and knowledgeable of the subject that she made me want to learn and study as much as I could to be successful in her class. I vividly remember the first day of class when she introduced herself to us she stated that she had "more degrees than a thermometer!" I just remember being in awe and wanting to say the same thing one day. I read and studied the materials she gave us each week, passed every test, and observed how labs were conducted. I wanted to make her proud of me and let her know that what she was teaching was important and that the content was extremely interesting to me. Never in my wildest dreams did I think it would be a teacher in a secondary classroom. I wanted to be a pharmacist but now I can't stop

my love for learning and teaching others what I have learned. I am so proud of the foundation that was instilled in me and made me want to always be in the scientific field. These are the qualities that I want my students to feel when they are in my classroom or a part of my activities that I create for them. My chemistry teacher always pushed us to do our best and to take the subject seriously. She had a lot of real world experiences that she would share with us and I try to do the same with my students. Minority students especially do not see the relevance of STEM in their communities. Most families are “scared” of the idea of math and science and don’t encourage it nor do they introduce these students to STEM related activities. In the classroom and the community is where we must make sure our students experience as many STEM related activities as they can. The challenging part is understanding subjects that look foreign in our real world. Making sure to relate these items to things that make common sense to a student who would not see them everyday is a challenge as well as getting them to become life long learners in this subject area. I make sure my students are also exposed to as many outside activities as I can which include science museums, field trips and guest speakers to help bring in the relevance that they need.

Part 3: Role of culture in teaching

Current ways that I include culture in my classroom is to have them see me, first of all, actively engaged in STEM activities. Secondly, I am a huge advocate of guest speakers and outside activities that incorporate minorities in STEM. I am involved in many professional development programs in STEM and I actively participate in community endeavors that advocate STEM. I am also a pharmacy technician, so I bring a lot of medical relevance to the classroom. Some of my students have seen me working in the field and know that I am truly a passionate advocate of the subject. I never want my students to feel detached from what we are studying

and think I am robotically reading from text only. Culture in STEM plays a huge role in teaching and learning in the classroom. For many, many years, minorities were not allowed to be in the forefront of the STEM movement. We have known many minorities in STEM but not as many as they really are. Recent movies, like “Hidden Figures” for example, brought the importance of minorities in STEM to light. Not just race, but gender and culture were also important factors for the advancement of STEM. We must continue to push ourselves and our students further in the advancement of STEM and show them just how important and relevant they are. I see so much growth and expansion of STEM in the near future and we all need to make sure we are a part of it.