

Teaching Students Empathy: Justifying Diverse and Inclusive Texts

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Abstract : It's not uncommon in the US to see news article headlines about public school teachers being scrutinized for what they are teaching or see the general public weighing in on whether or not they think certain controversial subjects should be addressed in the classroom- such as LGBTQ+ or multicultural literature. Even though this is a subject that has been written about and discussed for years, it continues to be a relevant topic in education as it continues to be a struggle to implement more diverse texts. Although it is valid for teachers to fear controversy when they attempt to create a more diverse or inclusive curriculum, it is a fight worth fighting because of the benefits students can gain from being exposed to a wide range of texts. This paper is different from others of its kind because it addresses many of the counterarguments often made to implementing LGBTQ+ or multicultural literature in secondary classrooms. It not only encourages educators to try to include more diverse texts, but it gives them the tools to address common concerns and be sound in their reasoning for choosing these texts. This can be of interest to those educators who are not English teachers because a truly diverse and inclusive curriculum would include other subjects as well- including history, art, and more. By the end of my proposed paper, readers will feel encouraged to choose more diverse and inclusive texts for their classrooms. They can also be confident that if met with opposition or controversy, as is sometimes common when implementing new texts, that they have sound arguments and reasoning for why they chose to include these texts. This reasoning is that, based on the research, studies have found there are benefits to students studying texts about those different from themselves, because it teaches them empathy and helps fight prejudice.

Keywords : education, diverse, inclusive, multicultural, lgbtq+, pedagogy

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