Introduction
The population of rural and urban Nevada is becoming more diverse, which encourages those of us working in schools or in communities to examine how such changing demographics impact the way we engage with local residents (Sierra Pacific, 2007). Efforts to conduct effective educational programs within this context require us to be more culturally responsive and respectful. Integrating multicultural education in our work is one way to address the many issues related to equity, diversity, and identity.

This fact sheet offers strategies to become more inclusive and culturally appropriate when designing and implementing education programs. It is the second publication in the Multicultural Education Series, which also includes: (1) Defining Multicultural Education, (2) Need for Multicultural Education in Nevada, and (3) Personal Transformation and Multicultural Education.

Incorporating Multicultural Content
There are four approaches to integrating ethnic and multicultural content into curriculum (Banks, 1997):

- Contributions
- Additive
- Transformation
- Social Action

This series is intended for youth workers, teachers, school personnel, Extension faculty and staff, and others who are working in communities. The goal is to create and implement more inclusive and culturally relevant educational programs. Multicultural Education is a vehicle for people who have different value systems, customs, and communication styles to discover ways to respectfully and effectively share resources, talents and ideas. It incorporates the idea that all students-regardless of their gender and social class, and their ethnic, racial, or cultural characteristics-should have an equal opportunity to learn.
The “Social Action” approach is described as having the greatest potential for achieving the goals of multicultural education. This approach enables educators to be social change agents as they promote democratic values and empower participants. Education programs using the social action approach also support sound youth development practice and include the eight keys to quality youth development (Center for 4-H Youth Development, 1995).

Guiding Principles
Sometimes the myth that a multicultural program is only about different cultures creates a barrier for educators. Actually, an education program that is multicultural can focus on any topic, so that this type of programming is applicable, regardless of the area of specialization. What makes an education program multicultural are its guiding principles. The following guiding principles have been used by organizations that have integrated a social action approach into their programs:

**Inclusivity:** Recruitment in all areas is intentional, including staff, volunteers and participants from a variety of cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds. Posting opportunities in newspapers that serve diverse readers or sharing program information directly with community leaders in neighborhoods not traditionally served demonstrate inclusivity. Inclusivity allows relationships to develop across potential barriers, is more welcoming and provides a more comfortable environment for more youth and adults while exemplifying role models from diverse backgrounds.

**Democratic:** Activities are designed and modified in response to the voice of the participants, thus teaching issues that are critical to the students. Different groups have different educational needs, often revealed in needs assessments.

**Social Justice:** Children, youth and families are engaged in opportunities to critically examine communities and seek ways to end the injustices they find. This demonstrates praxis, a term that Paulo Freire used to describe reflection and action to transform our world (1990).

**Experiential:** Education programs are designed for students to do, reflect and apply what they learn. They first experience an activity. Then they share their reflections and analyze their experience. Next, their experiences and reflections are

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**Level 4: Social Action Approach**
Students make decisions on social issues & take actions to help solve them

**Level 3: Transformation Approach**
Structure of curriculum is changed so that students can view concepts, issues, events & themes from perspectives of diverse cultural groups

**Level 2: Additive Approach**
Content, concepts, themes & perspectives are added to curriculum without changing its structure

**Level 1: Contributions Approach**
Focuses on heroes, holidays and discrete cultural elements

Source: Levels of Integration of Multicultural Content (Banks, 1997).
linked to the real world, where they can transfer what they learned into other situations in their life.

**Cultural Responsiveness:** People from different cultures learn differently and have different life realities that are considered when developing curriculum. For example, educators can be more culturally responsive by providing opportunities for group, rather than individual activities, since some ethnic groups are more accustomed to making decisions as a group.

**Youth Leadership Development:** Youth are also a marginalized group in many of our communities, so opportunities for them to better understand leadership through discussions, dialogues with community leaders and engaging with role models are integrated into educational programs. These types of practices can allow additional time for youth to develop leadership skills learned through community interaction. Additionally, time to practice and further develop leadership skills is allotted.

**Building Community:** Educational activities are developed to build trust, commitment and relationships. Having students work on a project together, towards a common goal will help build community.

**Emancipatory:** Activities and methodologies which give power to people who have been traditionally marginalized are utilized to show that they are valued and to enable them to learn how to act responsibly when they are in positions of power. An example would be encouraging a group in low-income housing to help design an educational program related to personal finance.

**Learning About Different Cultures**
Many educators struggle to know where to begin when trying to learn about the different cultures in their communities. Even figuring out whom to contact can be challenging.

One goal to work toward is to understand differences in cultural values and behavior codes between youth and educator. Educators must not view these differences as inferiorities, but rather recognize the individual human value of each person they work with. Possible methods to become more culturally competent include: reading books, attending cultural community events, visiting cultural community centers and talking with staff or visitors, asking individuals to share stories, or attending a workshop about a particular cultural group.

Striving to develop pedagogical skills appropriate to use with people from different ethnic, religious, socioeconomic class or other diverse cultural backgrounds should be another goal. This is called being culturally responsive. Different cultural groups sometimes have different learning styles, yet many educators are less familiar with the methods of programming and interaction that are effective and comforting to people with backgrounds different from their own. “Culturally responsive teaching does for Native American, Latino, Asian American, African American and low-income students what traditional instructional ideologies and actions do for middle-class European-Americans. It filters
content and teaching strategies and makes content more personally meaningful and easier to master (Gay, 2002).”

One skill to develop is public relations with different cultural communities. This involves discovering the dynamics within the community, which could include how interactions and relationships are negotiated, or how decisions are made.

Even more important is the development of a long-lasting relationship that is built on mutual respect. Being visible at local events and genuinely caring about the community can make a big difference when trying to initiate education programs with groups who had not traditionally participated.

Collaborations
Collaborating with organizations serving diverse groups is important in making educational programs inclusive and culturally appropriate. It demonstrates authenticity and commitment to multicultural programming by building partnerships and positive relationships with groups that may not have been involved in the past. Collaborations can strengthen the community by breaking down barriers through building relationships and cultural competency.

Conclusion
Youth workers, teachers, school personnel, Extension faculty and staff, and others who are working in communities are faced with increased diversity in their constituencies. In order to provide education that reaches new audiences, new strategies need to be implemented. Integrating a multicultural educational approach and becoming more culturally competent are steps that can be taken to create more inviting education programs that address critical needs in communities.

References


