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TODAY'S STUDENTS

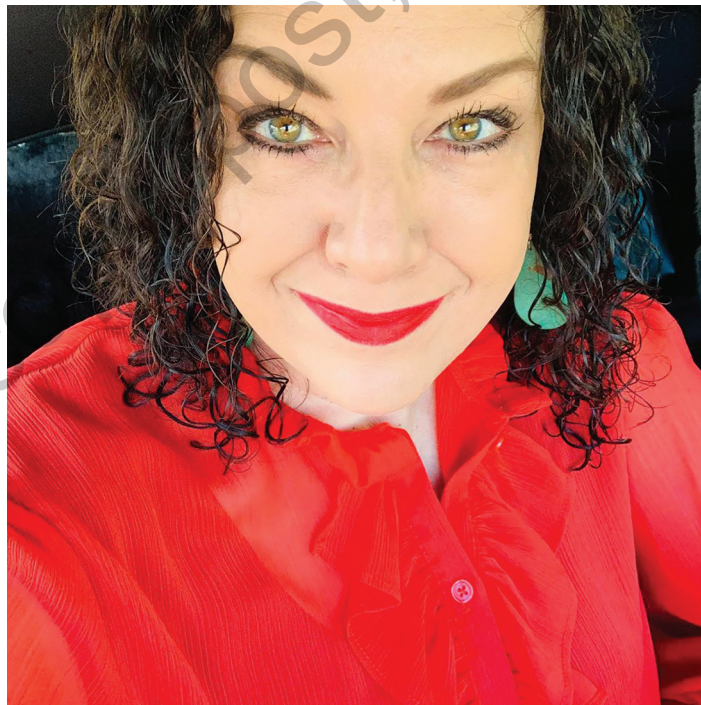
LEARNING OUTCOMES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- 2.1 Create strategies for developing a classroom environment that respects and values the race and ethnicity of all students and provides each student opportunities to learn at high levels.
- 2.2 Assess the importance of holding high expectations for all students regardless of the socioeconomic status (SES) of their families.
- 2.3 Analyze the value of bilingualism and educational programs that support students who are bilingual or multilingual.
- 2.4 Compare and contrast the definitions of sex and gender and how students' self-identification of their gender affects learning and school policies.
- 2.5 List actions that would support Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and other nonbinary (LGBTQ+) students in classrooms and schools.
- 2.6 Examine the impact of the religious beliefs of students and their families on classroom and school practices in your community.

TEACHER INTERVIEW

Ms. Chelsie Acosta



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A teacher for 15 years, Ms. Chelsie Acosta currently teaches middle schoolers in the English Language Development (ELD) program at Glendale Middle School in Salt Lake City, Utah. In addition, she teaches health to all seventh graders in the school. The students in her classes are approximately 98% students of color, predominantly Latinx students but also Black, Native Hawaiian, Tongan, and Other Pacific Islander students as well as recent refugees from Afghanistan and Africa. She is also an active member of the teachers union and serves on several committees at the national level.

Q: How do you incorporate the cultures and experiences of your students and their families into the curriculum and your instruction?

A: I will use my health classes as an example. So many different diseases are more dominant in certain cultures than they are in others. For example, Black populations and the Bible belt are really hit hard with heart disease. People on reservations and indigenous folks are at a higher risk for diabetes. So, not just posters on the walls, not just music playing in the background, not just the kind of activities that we used to do for the multicultural thing. It always felt very performative and very superficial. I am intentional in making sure that what students are reading—their supplemental information, articles they are reading, games they are playing, assignments they are doing—is multicultural and that they have options at any point. It is important for me that they can tap into looking into their own culture, especially being in a school like mine. What are the diabetes rates of Tonga, and what do they look like on the island of Tonga. How does that look like for Tongans here in the U.S.? Who has higher risk of diabetes?

If students want to choose their own culture to know more about, and share with the class, and take the information back to their community for a more collective healing, I try to make that happen. I am very much a learner who wants to know how this is really going to affect me and mine, and hook them that way. But also, how are we going to give back to our communities. And so, I really try to make my lessons, the information that is accessible to students, and their resources, all linked to their cultures. If some students don't want to do it on their own culture, then, they get to pick a different one. This work is also building solidarity amongst communities in this undercurrent of changing systems while changing their own health and their communities' health. So, that is really important to me. Presenters are different; they are diverse. The projects are set up that way. The articles that they are reading are stories from different cultures.

Q: What have you found to be the most successful strategies in working effectively with students from diverse groups?

A: I've been doing this long enough that I have been able to plug in and infuse diversity into each lesson, making sure that different voices, especially those that are marginalized, are represented within a lesson. The upside of technology is that there is so much access to information. Students are able to go online and find data on diabetes on Native American reservations. I teach my Navajo student how to go to the website of the Navajo Nation and see how the lack of water or diabetes or alcoholism or whatever is affecting people on the reservation. Students learn how to go into their own resources, not just the one that everyone else goes to, but really how to tailor it to themselves and their community.

Teaching English Language Development classes is a little more difficult. What I try to do with them is ensure the books that I have pulled, the supplemental pieces, the things that they read, that they write, or the games they play on Kahoot, are infused with faces, voices, and experiences that are similar to theirs. I have a big cloth map in my room on a bulletin board, and everyone that comes in gets to add a push pin when we find their city on the map. Students shout "On my gosh, I can't believe it. How long was your flight from Ethiopia here?" Even though they've not yet learned the language, it's funny, my students, all Level 1, can yell out "airplane" and have this fabulous look. We then google the city. Everyone's involved.

What strategies do I use? Definitely differentiation and scaffolding, but without a doubt, it is the similarities and differences that I believe allow me to also do a lot about racial and social justice and multicultural work. When you find all of students' similarities so that they all come together and listen to one another, the anxiety drops. And then the differences excite them at that point. That for me has been the best tool.

Q: How do you know students are learning?

A: Although we have the standardized yearly WIDA test, the little assessments along the way are important in assessing learning along with informal assessments, which I use so much more with these students. I look at their confidence and their confidence in speaking to me, even, the little

things like, “May I go to the bathroom.” At first, they just point at the hall pass for the first few months. And then I’ll say, “Do you need to go to the restroom?” “Do you need to go to the bathroom?” and then they’ll just shake their head and point at the hall pass. Then, after a while, they point at the hall pass and say “bathroom” or say “baño” or whatever, or toilet. It is so cute, my Afghani girls say “My toilet.” I have never heard that in our little English world. But it is really cute. And then after a while, they will come up, just grab the hall pass with their confidence and say, “May I go to the bathroom.” And so, that gets really fun to watch. Not just their language, their confidence and their comfort level is quite beautiful. When their confidence comes up, and they are able to raise their hand and say, “Ms. Acosta, how to say this” or “¿cómo se dice?” So, they are saying in Spanish, “How do I say this?” They are asking, instead of just being quiet. It’s so much about confidence and being comfortable in our class, in our school building. I think that is the most important thing for our newcomers.

And obviously when they bring their homework up and show me things or ask me to spell things. Those kind of steps along the way show me that they are learning. Sometimes, they will just engage in conversation, which is really fun. I’ll say, “Hey, hi. Nice job. I am really excited that you are so brave you came up to talk to me. Wow, your English is like awesome. Way to go.” Some of them have never even done school. Some of their schools don’t look like our schools. So, it is a lot of trauma coming to a new school, a new country.

Q: What brings you joy in teaching?

A: Oh my gosh, I love them. They are so exhausting, but I love them and I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else. The Farsi kids have brought me a renewed sense of the joy of the naivete, and I don’t know how to explain it. I don’t mean this in a negative sense. They’re like preschoolers and kindergartners with their innocence. They just giggle and have no idea that there’s another 30 kids in that room. And they just squeal, and they are so happy, and they run around, and it is such a different mentality that I was “Whoa. Where did this come from?” They are all Muslim and they are all super protected; I feel like they are innocent and their childhood is protected. I know they’ve seen terrible things, but day to day, they have brought so much joy to our space.

With my Black students, the beauty has been the Black Lives Matter movement post George Floyd and watching their confidence as Black humans but also as their community stands tall and is proud and wearing their doo-rags in school that we have now fought for. And so many of us now have Black Lives Matter flags hanging in our room and openly discuss **racism** and all of that. My Latinx community, my Latina community, we are a community that has been hit hard by ICE raids; having open conversations about those experiences is important. I think that what brings me joy is myself and other teachers who have this holistic approach of what’s in the best interest of our kids.

Questions to Consider

1. What is similar and different about Ms. Acosta’s class and the schools with which you are most familiar?
2. How prepared do you think you are to work in the diverse setting in which Ms. Acosta teaches?
3. What do you want to make sure you learn before you begin to work in a school with students from a number of diverse groups with which you have no or limited experience?

INTRODUCTION

The students you will be teaching may be very similar to you, coming from the same racial and ethnic group and from families with the same **socioeconomic status (SES)** and religious background as your own family. However, many new teachers find their first jobs in schools with students from groups and **cultures** with which they have little or no firsthand experience. You may have very different experiences than the students in your classroom as a result of your racial or ethnic group, language, SES, and/

or religion. Very few schools are segregated by **gender**, so it is likely that not all of your students will be the same **sex** as you, but some of them may have a different **sexual orientation** than you or identify their gender differently than you. You are also likely to have one or more students with a **disability** in the classroom.

Both students and teachers are multicultural. They are all members of multiple groups in society. Our identities are influenced by our **race, ethnicity**, gender, SES, language(s), religion, sexual orientation, and mental and physical abilities. Being a member of one of these groups affects how we see ourselves and how we see members of another group. Religion, for instance, may have a great influence on how we think girls and boys should behave. In our society, race and economics define power relationships. Our identities are also determined by others who define us based on their observations of who we are and their experiences or lack of experiences with members of our cultural groups.

One of the keys to being successful teachers is the care extended to each student in a classroom. A part of caring is to know the students, their families, and the realities of their everyday lives. This task is much easier in a closeknit community in which most families know one another because they attend the same church, synagogue, temple, or mosque. It is more challenging in large urban and suburban areas in which the histories and experiences of families differ greatly. At the same time, we are more alike than different. Because we are lifelong learners, we should continue to explore our similarities and differences as we learn about each other.

The growing diversity of the student population offers us the opportunity to learn new cultures and expand our cultural competencies. To help all students learn, we should learn as much as possible about groups other than our own before we begin teaching. Learning about the cultures of our students and communities can be one of the joyful outcomes of teaching. This chapter introduces the student diversity you may encounter in your future classrooms.

HOW RACIALLY AND ETHNICALLY DIVERSE ARE U.S. SCHOOLS?

We are often asked to identify our race or ethnicity on applications and surveys. Our ethnicity is generally determined by the country or countries from which our families or ancestors have come. Race, on the other hand, is a sociohistorical concept based on society's perception that differences among people based on the color of their skin exist and that these differences are important (Omi & Winant, 2015). The U.S. Census Bureau places the population in six **pan-ethnic** and racial groups: Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Hispanic or Latinx, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and white. The category "Two or More Races" is also available to acknowledge that parents or ancestors are from different races. Still, a number of people find it difficult to classify themselves into one of these groups because they do not see themselves as a member of any of them. This section provides a brief introduction to the ethnic and racial diversity of students in schools today.

Race and Ethnicity of the Population

Native Americans, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Other Pacific Islanders are **indigenous** people who inhabited the United States for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans. In the 2020 Census, 9.7 million people, or 2.9% of the U.S. population, identified as Native American, Alaska Native, or "in combination with another racial or ethnic group" (Jones et al., 2021). People of Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander heritage comprised 0.5% of the population. The federal government recognizes 574 tribal governments (U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2023), with the largest number of Native American members being Cherokee, Navajo, Choctaw, Chippewa, Sioux (i.e., Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota peoples), Apache, and Blackfeet. Of the 228 Federally Recognized Tribes under the jurisdiction of the Alaska Regional Office (U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, n.d.), the five largest Alaska Native tribes are Yup'ik, Iñupiat, Tlingit and Haida, Alaskan Athabascan, and Aleut. At least 13% of Native Americans and Alaska Natives live on a reservation, on trust lands, or in an Alaska native village (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2023). Nearly 7 in 10 Native Americans and Alaska Natives live in the Great Plains and western states. Alaska, New Mexico, South Dakota,



First (or Native) Americans live in communities across the United States but continue to celebrate and preserve their heritage in powwows, which are social gatherings that usually include competitive dancing and honor American Indian veterans.

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Oklahoma, and Montana are the states with the largest percentages of Native Americans or Alaska Natives (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023b).

Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders live in all U.S. states, but almost half of them live in Hawaii and California (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023a). Almost 1.6 million residents identify as Native Hawaiians or Other Pacific Islanders, with over half of them identifying as biracial or multiracial (Jones et al., 2021). This group includes people who identify as “Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Guamanian or Chamorro, Fijian, Tongan, or Marshallese peoples and encompasses the people within the United States jurisdictions of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia” (Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, 2022, para 1.).

The ancestors of most Black Americans, who made up 14.2% of the population in 2020 (Jones et al., 2021), involuntarily arrived in this country beginning in 1619 when a Dutch ship arrived near Point Comfort, Virginia (now Hampton, Virginia), with 20 or more enslaved Africans (Hannah-Jones et al., 2021). Over the intervening 400 years, Black Americans have developed their own culture from their African, European, and Native American heritages and their unique experiences in this country. New immigrants from Africa began to increase after 1970, growing to 8.8% of all immigrants in 2021 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022c). Most Black students are greatly influenced by their group membership because of a common history of slavery and discrimination, which continues today.

Asian Americans have immigrated to the United States from numerous countries across the world's largest continent and are currently one of the fastest-growing groups in the United States. Chinese Americans are the largest Asian ethnic group in the United States, estimated to be 5.2 million residents in 2021, followed by

Asian Indians (4.8 million), Filipinos (4.4 million), Vietnamese (2.3 million), Korean (2 million), and Japanese (1.6 million) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023a). Two in five Asian Americans live in three states: California, New York, and Texas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023a). They account for almost 40% of Hawaii's population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023b) and 6% of the U.S. population (Jones et al., 2021).

The Spanish were among the earliest European explorers in the North and South Americas. When the United States annexed the southwestern part of the country in 1848, the Mexican population was the majority ethnic group of that region who lost their power as European Americans began to govern that area. Latinx Americans, who comprised 18.7% of the U.S. population in 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017), have ethnic roots in many nations. Mexican Americans are the largest of this pan-ethnic group; other families come from or have ancestors from Central America, Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, South America, and Europe. Over half of the Latinx population lives in California, Florida, and Texas.

European Americans have been the dominant, most powerful ethnic group in the United States from the time they established the first colonies. Before the **civil rights** movement of the 1960s and 1970s, U.S. presidents, governors, Congress, and state legislatures had almost always been white men except for a brief period during the reconstruction period. European Americans, who are predominantly white, comprise the largest proportion of the U.S. population. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that non-Hispanic whites were 59.3% of the population in 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022c) and are projected to be 55.8% in 2030 and 49.7% by 2045 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2018). Another 16.3% of the population are Latinx residents who report their race as white (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022a).

The Impact of Immigration

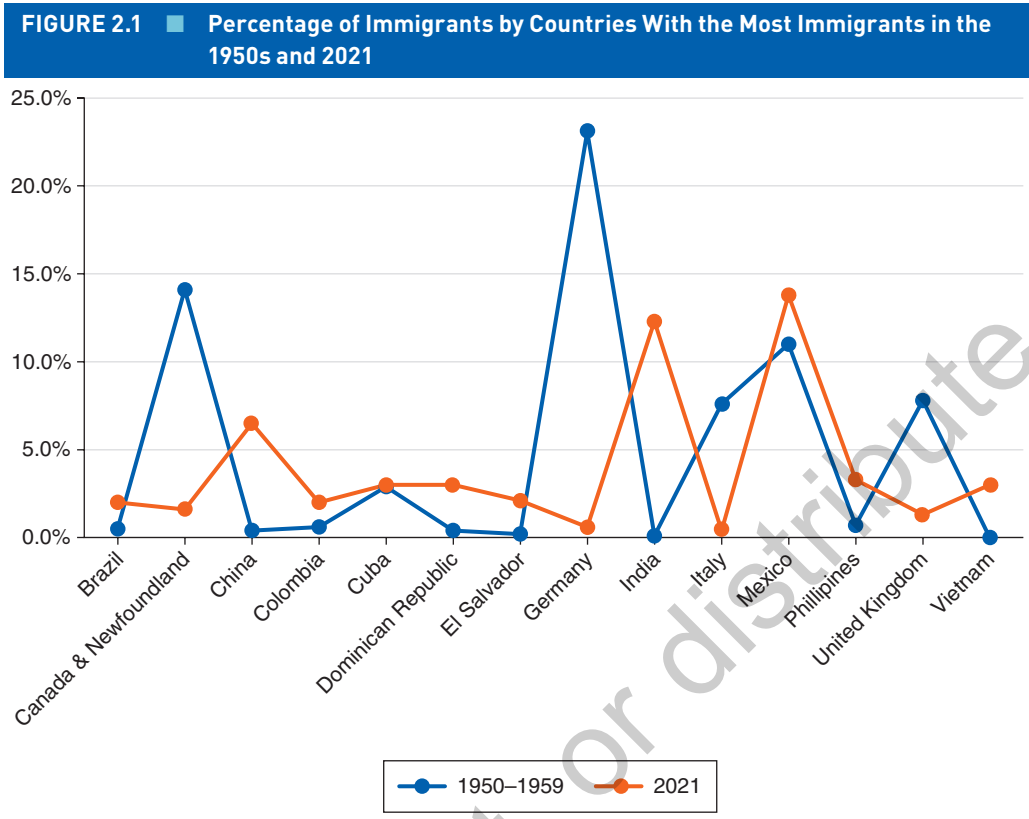
Immigration has been a major issue in the last two presidential elections and continues to divide Congress and the public. A national survey by the Pew Research Center in 2020 found that two in three respondents thought that immigrants strengthened the country “‘because of their hard work and talents,’ while about a quarter (24%) say immigrants burden the country by taking jobs, housing and health care” (Budiman, 2020, para. 33). Differing perspectives on immigration continue to be debated as in congressional and presidential elections.

The number of immigrants obtaining permanent resident status during the past decade has been approximately 1 million persons per year (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022c). California, Florida, New York, and Texas are home to over half (55%) of **naturalized citizens** (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022b). Large cities attract immigrants with the largest concentrations found in the metropolitan areas of New York City, Los Angeles, and Miami (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022a). Nonmetropolitan areas increasingly are also becoming home to immigrants. As a result, rural, urban, and suburban schools across the country include students from different cultures and with many languages other than English.



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The nations from which immigrants come have changed over time, primarily because of immigration laws set by Congress. Prior to 1965, immigrants allowed to enter the U.S. were primarily people from northern and western Europe. Immigration from China and Japan was banned at different periods. When the Johnson–Reed Act of 1924, which favored European immigration, was abolished in 1965, immigration from other parts of the world increased dramatically. Figure 2.1 shows the differences in the countries from which the most immigrants came before 1965 compared to 2021. Immigration since 1965 has made the United States much more multicultural, which may be the reason that some people lobby for its restriction. By 2030, 43% of the foreign-born population in the United States is expected to have been born in Mexico and other Latin American countries, 28% in Asia, 18% in Europe, and 11% in Africa or the Caribbean (Vespa et al., 2018).



Source: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics. (2022d). Persons obtaining lawful permanent resident status by region and selected country of last residence: Fiscal years 1820 to 2021 (Table 2). <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2021#test>



These immigrants were among the more than 12 million people from Europe who entered the United States through Ellis Island in the New York Harbor, which stopped processing immigrants in 1954.

Archive Photos/Stringer via Getty Photos

Refugees are another group of immigrants who have been recognized by the federal government as being persecuted or legitimately bearing persecution in their home country because of race, religion, nationality, or membership in a specific social or political group. The number of refugees differs from year to year, with a high of over 207,000 in 1980 to a low of 11,454 in 2021 (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022e). The largest number of refugees in 2021 came from countries that were at war or engaged in political unrest, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (43%), Syria (11%), Myanmar (7%), Ukraine (7%), and Iraq (7%) (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2022 f).

The most controversial immigration issue in the country is that of unauthorized immigrants, who made up 3.5% of the nation's population in 2022 (Britannica ProCon.org, 2022). Seven percent of K–12 students have at least one unauthorized immigrant parent (Passel & Cohn, 2016). Some unauthorized immigrants originally entered the country as travelers or on student or other visas. They extended their stay beyond the authorized date and may be eligible to have their status reclassified as legal at some point if they meet the requirements for employment-based visas, are classified as refugees, or are sponsored by a family as allowed by law. The number of unauthorized immigrants from Mexico has been on the decline since 2007, with 48% of unauthorized immigrants in 2019 being from Mexico, and the number from Central America and Asia on the increase (Migration Policy Institute, n.d.). Two in three of the unauthorized immigrants have been in the United States over a decade (Lopez et al., 2021). Almost three in five unauthorized immigrants live in six states—California, Texas, Florida, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois (Krogstad et al., 2019).

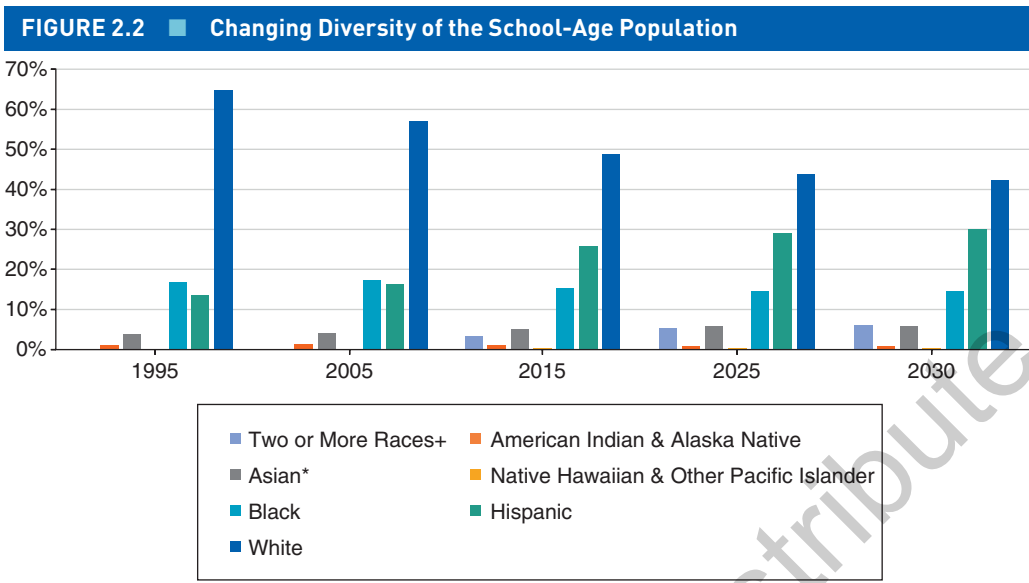
In 1975, the Texas legislature decided to withhold funds from local school districts for children who were not legally admitted into the United States. The act also allowed school districts to deny enrollment to unauthorized children. When the Supreme Court was asked in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) to determine the constitutionality of the Texas statute, it ruled that a state cannot deny unauthorized students a public education. School officials cannot ask parents for their immigration status, their Social Security numbers, or other documentation that might expose their status.

Racial and Ethnic Diversity in Schools

The school population reflects the growing diversity of the country more profoundly than the general population because a large number of immigrants are Latinx and Asian, and the average age of those groups is younger than whites, resulting in a larger proportion of births. Students of color were 35% of the school-age population in 1995 but were 55% in 2021 and projected to be 57% by 2030, as shown in Figure 2.2 (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2022a). The percentage of Black, Native American, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander students will remain about the same, while the number of Latinx, Asian American, and biracial or multiracial students will continue to grow over the next decade.

The chances that you will teach students from diverse ethnic and racial groups depend on the location of your school. The largest concentration of students of color is in the western part of the United States; the Midwest is the least diverse. The highest concentration of Black students is in the South, where they make up 22% of the student population. Latinx students make up 44% and Asian American students 8% of the student population in the West (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2022a). Already, more than 60% of public school students are students of color in Arizona, California, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, and Texas. Over half of the student population are students of color in Alaska, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, and Virginia. The number is approaching 50% in four other states (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2022b). Students of color also are the majority of the population in many urban schools across the country.

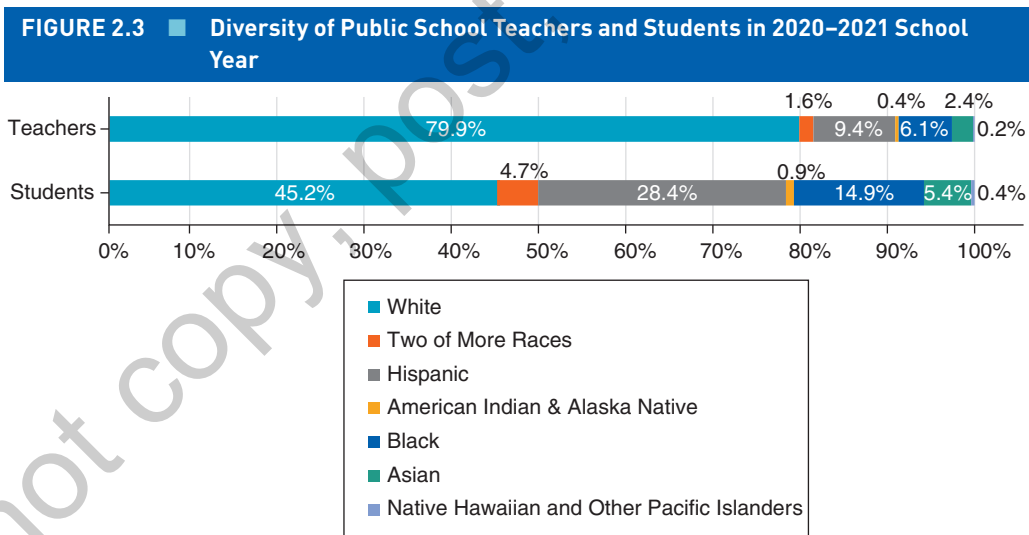
As shown in Figure 2.3, the diversity of teachers in the nation's schools does not match the ethnic and racial diversity of the student population. Four in five public school teachers are white, and three in four are women (Taie et al., 2022). Not all teachers understand their students' cultures or have any



*Asian included Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander in 1995 and 2005.

+Data on two or more races were not collected nationally until 2008.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2022a, July). Enrollment and percentage distribution of enrolment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and region: Selected years, fall 1995 through fall 2030 (Table 203.50). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_203.50.asp?current=yes



Source for Student Data: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2022a, July). Enrollment and percentage distribution of enrolment in public elementary and secondary schools, by race/ethnicity and region: Selected years, fall 1995 through fall 2030 (Table 203.50). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_203.50.asp?current=yes

Source for Teacher Data: Taie, S., Lewis, L., and Spiegelman, M. (2012, December). Characteristics of 2020–21 public and private K–12 school teachers in the United States: Results from the National Teacher and Principal Survey First Look (NCES 2022–113). <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2022113>

experience with them. In these cases, teachers and students may misunderstand each other's cultural cues. Teachers may accept negative **stereotypes** about students from ethnic and racial groups different from their own. Misinformed interpretations of student behavior can result in unnecessary conflicts. Students and parents may come to believe that the teacher does not respect or value their cultures and experiences. They may feel that the only way to be successful in school is to adopt the teacher's culture, which may lead to the denigration of their own culture.

Teaching Students From Diverse Racial and Ethnic Groups

How should educators respond to the ethnic and racial diversity in their schools? Many teachers say they are **colorblind**, meaning that they don't "see" the race of their students and treat all students the same. They believe that racial inequities were eliminated as a result of the civil rights movement and that discrimination is no longer "a central factor shaping Blacks' life chances" (Bonilla-Silva, 2022, p. 7). The problem with a colorblind approach is that it denies students of color an essential part of their identity, inadvertently making them invisible (Howard, 2019). It also makes whiteness a norm against which other students are measured rather than overtly acknowledging the importance of students' unique identities, which are linked to their race and culture. Colorblindness extends to the curricula and activities of most schools by predominantly reflecting the cultures of white Americans and not effectively integrating the cultures of students of color. Teaching everyone in the same way is not working, as shown in the great differences in academic achievement among groups as measured by standardized tests. Instead, teachers should recognize and include the cultures, histories, and experiences of multiple racial and ethnic groups into the curriculum and their instruction so that all students see themselves represented and respected in the classroom.

Disparities in the academic performance and achievement among groups of students are sometimes referred to as the **achievement gap**. Although some students from all groups perform at high levels, achievement data show that students from white and Asian American families are more likely than other students to score at high levels, graduate from high school and college, and attend professional schools. Black and Latinx students, as well as students who live in poverty, do not have the same educational opportunities as students from affluent families. They are less likely to take rigorous courses, are disproportionately placed in special education, and are less likely to finish high school in 4 years.

Another way of looking at academic differences among groups is the availability of opportunities to learn. This **opportunity gap** begins early in the lives of children. Some families are able to provide their children with numerous educational resources and opportunities to travel and participate in education programs during their early years, especially during summer vacations. Other children have access to few educational resources and suffer from poor health care and nutrition, which can affect their ability to concentrate and focus on school work or even attend school every day. Peer pressure, **tracking** practices, negative stereotyping, test bias, and many other factors also contribute to the achievement opportunities among students. Students from low-income families are more likely to experience inadequate or insufficient educational opportunities than their more affluent peers. For example, students in poverty and students of color often attend high-poverty schools where more than 75% of the students are eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, and performance on standardized tests is lower than in other schools.

Elimination of the opportunity gap will require a deliberate effort to provide personalized attention, expert teachers, high-quality curriculum, and more and better learning resources (Darling-Hammond & Darling-Hammond, 2022). Recommendations for reform to improve academic achievement have included reducing class sizes, expanding early-childhood programs, improving the quality of teachers, encouraging more students of color to enroll in high-level courses, and using **culturally responsive teaching** practices in the classroom.

In schools where the gap has been eliminated, educators have stopped blaming students and parents for low achievement. Instead, they have taken responsibility for ensuring that students develop the expected outcomes (Boykin & Noguera, 2011). Professor Richard Milner (2020) concludes that "helping students embrace their identity, build transferable skills (such as thinking, analyzing, problem solving), and fall in love with learning in order to make the world better for the collective should be our central aims in education" (p. 15). When students aren't learning, the challenge is to figure out what changes can be made to engage them in their learning.

The assets and identities that students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds bring to the classroom need to be recognized and honored in classrooms to maximize their academic and social capacity (Milner, 2020). Teachers must be "willing to find the good and worth in students" (Milner, 2020, p. 221). Students of color do not always trust teachers from racially privileged groups because those teachers are more likely not to understand the impact of race on their lives (Ishimaru, 2020). Racism's impacts on



Eliminating racism in schools and society requires the involvement and action of citizens from diverse racial and ethnic groups.
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interactions in the classroom, the curricula, and school policies have often been ignored or not validated by educators. Effectively teaching students from different racial and ethnic groups is more than simply the content of the curriculum. It requires teachers who can connect with students, care about students, affirm them, empathize with them, and ensure they feel safe (Milner, 2020).

Challenging Assumptions: The Value of Ethnic Studies

The Assumption

One of the ways to provide more in-depth coverage of racial and ethnic groups is through ethnic studies courses that focus on a single or pan-ethnic group. Critics of ethnic studies have charged that ethnic studies courses “promote resentment toward a race or class of people” (Bloomekatz, 2019, p. 341). Does the research on ethnic studies support the assumption that ethnic studies have a negative impact on students?

The Research

Ethnic studies courses have a number of purposes, including the study of the history and experiences of a group from the perspective of the group being studied, the elimination of racism, decolonizing students’ minds, and sustaining students’ cultures. A comprehensive review of the literature on ethnic studies found that almost all studies reported that ethnic studies had a positive impact on students. For example, seven of the reviewed studies investigated courses that were taught from the perspective of a historically marginalized group and featured culturally mediated or culturally responsive pedagogy. All but one of the studies found a positive link between the course and students’ ethnic identity development and sense of empowerment for both students from the group being studied and other students (Sleeter & Zavala, 2020).

Sleeter and Zavala (2020) also reviewed studies of the academic impact of ethnic studies content, especially the “increased engagement of children and youth when people of their own racial ethnic group are in the curriculum” (p. 49). Twelve of the 14 studies “found a positive impact on students’ academic learning, as well as other student outcomes” (p. 56). Positive outcomes were particularly impressive in Native American communities in which the Native culture and knowledge was integrated in science and math content. Research on the Mexican American Studies (MAS) courses in Tucson found

that students in MAS had entered the courses in the 9th and 10th grades with lower GPA and achievement test scores than control students. By the end of the 12th grade, they had higher graduation rates than students who had not participated in MAS courses. An evaluation of the ninth-grade ethnic studies program in the San Francisco Unified School District, which serves a racially and ethnically diverse population, found that after controlling for variables such as entering GPAs of students, assignment to this course contributed to an increase in “attendance by 21 percentage points, GPA by 1.4 grade points, and credits earned by 23” (Dee & Penner, 2017, p. 217). In addition to the content of these courses, effective teaching was critical in reaching these positive outcomes.

Implications for Teaching and Learning

Overall, the ethnic studies courses and projects reviewed show evidence that they have a positive impact on students' identities and academic outcomes. All of the projects reviewed focused on the cultural identities and experiences of the group being studied from the perspectives of that group rather than the dominant perspective of the group. Students who were members of the group being studied may have felt that they were an integral part of the curriculum for the first time in their school lives. Members from other groups were learning about the similarities and differences among groups and the value of developing multiple perspectives and a better understanding of their community.

Ethnic studies courses are generally offered at the middle and high school levels as part of the social studies curriculum, but ethnic studies concepts can be integrated into the curriculum for mathematics, science, technology, and early-childhood and elementary classrooms as well. In the early grades, the racial and ethnic cultures of students in the classroom should be recognized, valued, and incorporated into their studies of mathematics and science as well as families and communities.

HOW DOES FAMILY INCOME AFFECT A STUDENT'S SCHOOL EXPERIENCES?

Schools generally reflect the income and wealth of the families of their students. More-affluent families have more economic, social, and political resources and, as a result, better schools. Even within a school, students are sometimes classified and sorted by their economic conditions, giving the advantage to students from higher-income families. As the nation has moved away from efforts to desegregate schools, students are increasingly segregated by economic levels, with a disproportionate number of Latinx and Black students enrolled in high-poverty schools.

Economic Diversity of Students

The lack of family resources affects the quality of housing and the environment in which students live, the food they eat, the way they dress, and the educational resources to which they have access. These economic conditions can also have a great impact on the quality of education they receive. Their schools may not have up-to-date laboratories and technology. Their teachers may not have majored in the subjects they are assigned to teach, may not have a license to teach, and may have a higher absentee rate than students in schools that serve more-affluent communities. With the opportunity gap with which these students enter schools, they need the best teachers and a great deal of support from school officials and the community to ensure they learn at the same levels as their more-affluent peers.

Students in Low-Income Families

Family members with low incomes may be temporarily unemployed or working at low wages because of a family illness or because they have lost a job as a result of economic conditions. A very small portion of the population is persistently poor as measured by living in poverty for 8 or more years. However, many working poor hold part-time or full-time jobs that pay the minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour or \$15,080 annually but can't pull themselves out of poverty with such a low income. Work in minimum-wage jobs can be sporadic, and unemployment is unpredictably affected by the economy. Fringe benefits usually are not available, leaving many of these workers without health insurance or vacation time.

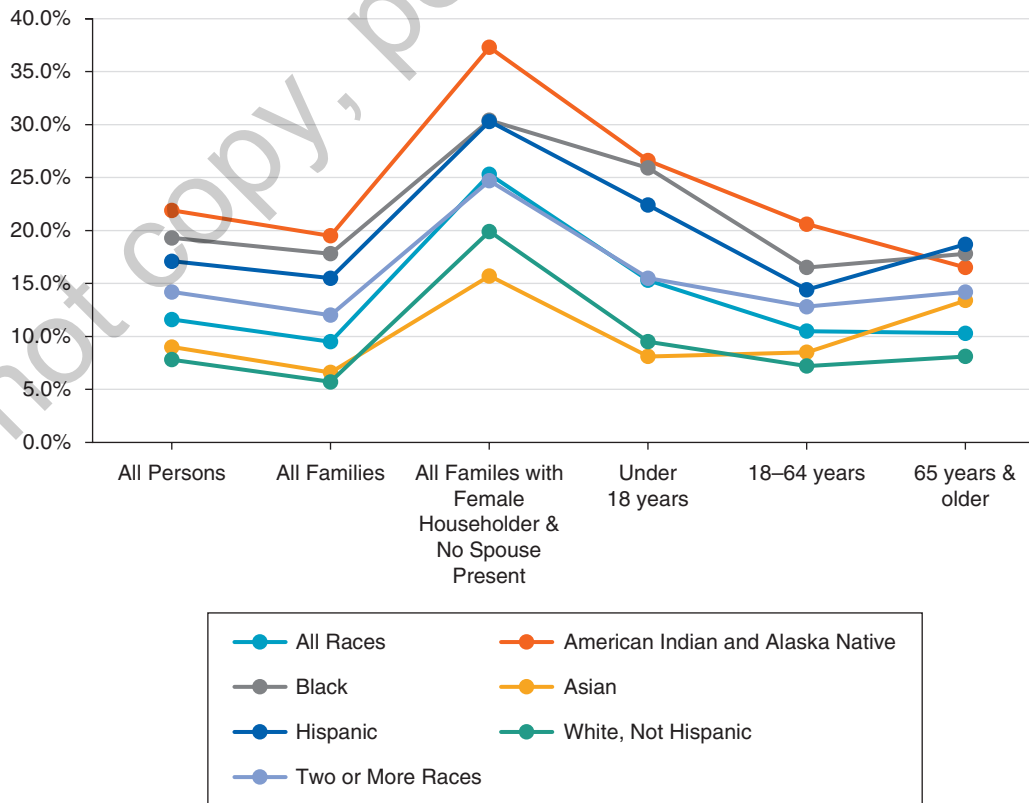
Poverty differs by age, race, and ethnicity, as shown in Figure 2.4. Although the number of whites in poverty is greater than any other group, the percentage of all whites in poverty is less than other groups, with a larger percentage of Native Americans and Alaska Natives being in poverty than any other group, followed by Black and Latinx Americans. Generally, the poverty rate for Asian Americans is near that of whites, although some Southeastern Asian ethnic groups have high poverty levels.

Because families of color generally earn less than white families, their children are more likely to be challenged by impoverished conditions. The rate of poverty is greater for children of color, with 31% of Native American and Alaska Native, 30% of Black, and 23% of Latinx children living in poverty, as compared with white and Asian children, as shown in Figure 2.5. Within this group are children who live in extreme poverty when their family's income is below half of the federal poverty threshold, making it extremely difficult to meet their nutritional, health, and housing needs (Koball et al., 2021).

Schools classify students as low income by the criteria that make them eligible to participate in the Free or Reduced-Price Lunch program. To be eligible for a Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, family income must fall below 130% of the federal poverty level, or \$39,000 for a family of four in the 2023–2024 school year (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2023). For a subsidized lunch, family income must fall between 130% and 185% of the federal poverty level, or between \$39,001 and \$55,500 for a family of four. Over half (52%) of all public school students in the United States were eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch in 2020 (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2021b).

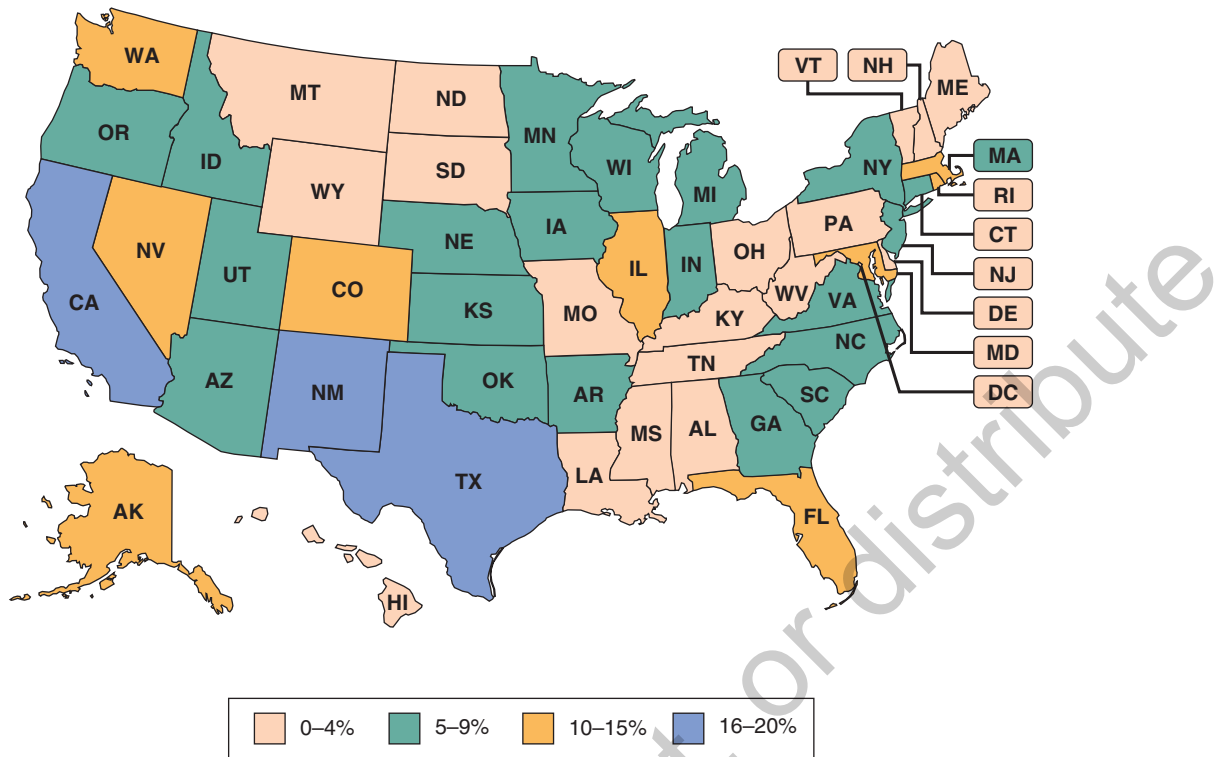
When students from low-income families are the majority of the students in a school, they are more likely to have low test scores, unsafe and unattractive schools, and less-than-stimulating schoolwork that has little meaning for their lives. They are not proportionately chosen to lead groups, assigned to Advanced Placement (AP) classes and other advanced programs, or encouraged to participate in extracurricular activities other than specific sports. An observer could conclude that these students are being prepared for jobs that more-affluent people are unwilling to take.

FIGURE 2.4 ■ Persons in Poverty by Family Type, Age, and Ethnic and Racial Groups, 2021



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2022b). Historical poverty tables: People and families—1959–2021 (Tables 2 & 3). <https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/income-poverty/historical-poverty-people.html>

FIGURE 2.5 ■ Percentage of Students Who Were English Learners in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools in 2019



Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2021a, October). English learner (EL) students enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools, by state: Selected years, fall 2000 through fall 2019 [Table 204.20]. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_204.20.asp?current=yes

What does living in a family with a low income mean for children and teenagers? For one, they generally are in poorer health than students in higher-income families. They have a greater incidence of vision and hearing problems, especially those caused by ear infections. They lack dental care, leading to toothaches. They have greater exposure to lead in water pipes, which affects their cognitive functioning and behavior. They are more likely to have asthma, especially when living in densely populated neighborhoods. They are less likely to have regular medical care and may lack health insurance. They suffer from food insecurity, and their nutrition is often inadequate. The lack of affordable housing results in their families moving from one school district to another. All of these factors affect school attendance and their ability to concentrate and attend carefully to their work when they are in school (Rothstein, 2013).

Students Who Are Experiencing Homelessness

Nearly 3.5 million children and young adults in the United States were homeless at some time during the previous year (National Homelessness Law Center, 2022). One in 10 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 was homeless or **couch surfing** over a 12-month period. The rate of homelessness was less for adolescents ages 13–17 but was still 1 in 30 adolescents (Morton et al., 2017). In its annual count of people experiencing homelessness on one night in January 2022, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) found 582,462 were experiencing homelessness on that night. Forty percent of the people experiencing homeless were unsheltered and sleeping on the street, in abandoned buildings, or in unsuitable places for human habitation. The other 60% were in emergency or temporary shelters and transitional housing programs (de Sousa et al., 2022).

Homeless people are not always unemployed. Some work at such low wages they are unable to afford housing. Other homeless people have lost their jobs or have become estranged from their families. Homeless women may have left home to escape violent relationships. Homeless teenagers may have left home to avoid abuse and severe family dysfunctions.

Public schools must provide educational rights to homeless children and youth. The **McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act** requires school districts to provide transportation for homeless students to stay in their schools of origin if their parents request it. Enrollment cannot be denied because homeless students do not have their school records, immunization records, proof of residency, or other documents. The school district's liaison for homeless students is expected to advocate for them, helping them access available services in the school system and community. In the 2016–2017 school year, almost 1.4 million students experienced homelessness at sometime during the year. Most of these students were sleeping in shared or doubled-up housing, hotels or motels, or shelters, but 4% of the students were sleeping in an unsheltered location (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2019). Having access to the Internet and completing homework can be very challenging to students experiencing homelessness, whether they are living with their family or are on their own.

Students in Middle-Class Families

Many Americans identify as middle class. It is a category that often includes everyone who works steadily and is not a member of the upper class. It ranges from service workers to teachers and nurses to well-paid professionals. This group includes white-collar workers who work in offices as secretaries, administrative assistants, and managers. It also includes many blue-collar workers who are involved in manual labor. Middle-class workers generally have greater job security and better fringe benefits than low-income workers. However, many families live from paycheck to paycheck, not earning enough to accumulate wealth. Both parents often work to make ends meet.



Many students identify themselves as middle class, which generally means that one or both of their parents are working and their family is buying a home or has stable living arrangements.

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The number of people of Black and Latinx heritages who are in the middle class has increased over the past five decades, but whites and Asian Americans continue to have disproportionately high representation in this group. The upper middle class usually has high educational expectations for its children, expecting them to attend college or receive training after they finish high school. Families are more directly engaged with schools than most less-affluent families.

Families with higher incomes can choose to send their children to private schools or contribute to school funds to pay for art, music, and additional teachers. They not only have computers at home but also ensure that their children have access to the latest technology. When their children are not learning at the level expected, they hire tutors. Their children participate in enrichment activities such as academic summer camps when they are not in school. Income provides the advantages to ensure that the children of higher-income families are able to achieve at high academic levels and attend college.

TEACHERS' LOUNGE

STUDENTS DON'T CARE WHAT YOU KNOW UNTIL THEY KNOW THAT YOU CARE



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It has been my experience while teaching middle and high school that students from diverse groups do not care what you have to say until they know that you care. Teaching is getting students to do what you want them to do while having them think it is their idea, because everybody loves their own ideas. This takes me into my experience with two of my middle school students in Henderson, North Carolina. Teaching math to students when it is not their favorite subject can be a bit of a task. I had one student in particular who was having problems, and I tutored him after school. We began to develop a student-mentor relationship that was of significant importance because the student lacked any male guidance. His family welcomed my relationship with the student. As a result, I was granted permission to take the student and his brother for an afternoon out on the town. We went to the movies and had dinner in a nice restaurant and spent time enjoying each other's company at my expense. At the time, this did not seem to be a big deal to me; however, it was a huge deal to the students. The students became ambassadors for me at the school and model students. The students realized that I really cared about them and that I wanted the best for them. The new challenge was that every student wanted to go to dinner and a movie with me now. You never know what you may be to a student and what need you fill. When you let them know you care, they will allow you to lead them where they need to go.

Peter M. Eley, PhD
Fayetteville State University
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Providing Equity in Schools

Most students who live in poverty have learned how to live in a world that is not imaginable to most middle-class students and teachers. Their knowledge and skills do not always fit into the middle-class orientation of schools. Students should see ordinary working people as valued members of society. They should see low-income families as contributing members of the school community, rather than as second-class citizens who are not expected to be involved in their children's education.

One of the first steps teachers could take to ensure they effectively serve students from low-income families is to reflect on their own perceptions of these students and their families. Do you think they will attend college? Do you think their families value education? Do you think they are likely to use drugs or participate in other harmful behaviors? Do you believe they are lazy and want to take advantage of government benefits? Negative stereotypes can affect teachers' ability to work effectively with students who live in low-income families and help them achieve at high levels.

Sociologists have documented the classification and segregation of students based on their race and economic status beginning in their first days of school. Most teachers can quickly identify the **cultural capital** that students bring to school. At the same time, many teachers develop expectations for their students' behavior and academic achievement based on students' cultural capital. Often unknowingly, they then develop instruction and interactions with their students that ensure they will behave as the teachers expect—a phenomenon called the **self-fulfilling prophecy**.

If a teacher's goal is to spend extra time with students who are struggling with academics with the intent of ensuring that they develop the academic skills necessary to move to a higher level, a grouping strategy might be successful. The problem is that too often, students identified as having lower academic ability at the beginning of the year end the school year with little improvement in their skills, just as the teacher had projected. Unfortunately, their lack of academic growth during that year usually follows them throughout their school career. When teachers make such judgments about students based primarily on their social class status, they are preventing them from having an equal opportunity for academic achievement (Gershenson & Papageorge, 2018). In these cases, a teacher's expectations for student achievement lead to the confirmation of the self-fulfilling prophecy. The practice is not congruent with the democratic belief that all students deserve equal education opportunities.

Teachers are critical in ensuring that students from low-income families are provided all of the opportunities possible in the classroom. They are assisted in this process by schools that have created a culture for what Budge and Parrett (2018) call "disrupting poverty." Budge and Parrett have found that the teachers in high-performing, high-poverty schools care about students, make students feel they belong, and intentionally foster relationships with students. They also have empathy for students, understand the challenges they face, and believe they can meet high standards with appropriate support. Teachers provide opportunities to help students achieve at levels equal to their more advantaged peers. Teachers take responsibility for student learning. When students are not learning, teachers reteach lessons using different instructional strategies to make the content meaningful to students. Finally, teachers continue to confront their own biases and have the courage to try to overcome the barriers to learning that some students face.

One of the joys of teaching is to overcome the odds against students whose families are low income by guiding them to academic performance at the same level as their more-affluent peers. Teachers should expect all of their students to meet rigorous academic requirements regardless of the income of their families. If teachers require less of low-income students, students may think that teachers don't think they are as capable as the other students.

WHAT IF STUDENTS' LANGUAGES DO NOT INCLUDE ENGLISH?

Language diversity is valued in most countries of the world. The populations of many European, Middle Eastern, African, and Asian countries are bilingual or **multilingual**. In today's global world, in which many companies operate internationally, employees who know more than one language and culture can be an asset to the company, especially in its interactions with other nations in the areas of commerce, defense, education, science, and technology. Bilingualism is also an asset for jobs such as hotel

clerks, airline attendants, social workers, nurses, teachers, and police officers, who may be interacting with individuals who speak little or no English. Becoming multilingual and multicultural is a valuable goal for all students, including those who are English speakers (Nutta, 2021).

Language Diversity of Students

More than 67 million residents over the age of 5 in the United States spoke a language other than English at home in 2019, almost double the number in 1980 (Dietrich & Hernandez, 2022). Many are people who recently immigrated and have children who are learning English in school. Nearly four in five U.S. residents speak only English. Of the one in five people who speak a language other than English at home, 62% of them report that they speak English “very well,” and only 19% do not speak English well or at all (Dietrich & Hernandez, 2022).

Over the past decade, the percentage of the Latinx population who speak Spanish at home has been declining, due in large part to the decline in immigration and the growth in the number of the U.S.-born Latinx population. Ninety-seven percent of families who recently immigrated to the United States speak Spanish to their children, but that share drops to 71% in second-generation families with at least one parent who had immigrated and to 49% of third-generation families with parents who were born in the United States (Lopez et al., 2018). Languages other than English and Spanish that are spoken most often at home are Chinese, Tagalog, Vietnamese, Arabic, French, Korean, German, Russian, and Haitian (Dietrich & Hernandez, 2022). At least 30% of the population in California, Texas, New Mexico, New York, New Jersey, Florida, and Nevada speak a language other than English at home (Dietrich & Hernandez, 2022).

Teaching English Learners (ELs)

One in 10 students in public schools were English learners in 2019, speaking more than 400 languages (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021b), with three in four of them speaking Spanish (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2021a). English learners live in all states, but the percentage of English learners differs from state to state, as shown in Figure 2.5, with Texas having the highest percentage of English learners and West Virginia the fewest (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021a). Children who enter the United States when they are younger are more likely to speak English at home and to speak it “very well” compared to their peers who immigrated when they were older. However, older students are able to eventually catch up to the English-speaking ability of their peers (Dietrich & Hernandez, 2022). The U.S. Department of Education requires school districts to have procedures to identify English learners and assess their English proficiency to determine the need for services such as special instruction to improve the child’s English. School districts must provide appropriate language assistance services until English learners are proficient in English (Education Commission of the States, 2020).

The children in families who have recently immigrated to the United States have different educational experiences. Some have never been in school and know no English. Other children who recently arrived in the country have strong educational backgrounds and are fluent in English (Calderón, 2019–2020). Some families work hard to retain their first language from one generation to another, using it at home or sending their children to classes to study their home or heritage language and culture. They are helped in this process when they live in communities that value bilingualism.

Teachers should always validate and honor the languages of their students while they teach English learners to become fluent in English. The challenge is to ensure English learners are understanding the content that is being taught at the same time they are learning English. An advantage to being able to use the languages of students in the classroom is that students can draw on resources in their languages that they know and that will help them learn academic content. Teachers, teaching assistants, and/or volunteers who speak the languages of students can provide feedback and essential support to English learners as needed to clarify content and assist with communications with other students. Many of these students attend segregated high-poverty schools that further limit their access to the enriched educational resources that support development of knowledge and skills at the same level as their more-affluent English-speaking peers (Greenberg et al., 2021).

School districts use different educational approaches to support English learners, which sometimes is mandated by the state legislature (Education Commission of the States, 2020). The program used

most often by schools is English as a Second Language (ESL), in which the academic content is taught in English and students learn English through ESL instruction. Instructional strategies are similar to ESL in sheltered English or structured English immersion programs, but students in the classroom are all English learners. Bilingual and dual-language immersion programs use students' languages and English for instruction. A goal of transitional bilingual programs is to develop students' English proficiency and move them into English-only classes as rapidly as possible. Dual-language immersion programs, sometimes known as two-way bilingual programs, are designed to develop students' proficiency in both languages, and classes may include both English learners and students who are English speakers (Education Commission of the States, 2020).

Thinking Differently: Plurilingualism

One of the concerns about the current approaches to teaching students who are not fluent in English is the deficit view of students that perceives their languages and cultures as deficient and focuses on their lack of English fluency (Lander, 2019–2020). Instead, an asset-based approach capitalizes on students' "unique and expanding linguistic repertoires that are ready to be utilized as classroom resources" (Dover & Rodríguez-Valls, 2022, p. 13). In addition, the cultures, knowledge, and experiences of students are respected and a valued resource in teaching and creating a positive, supportive classroom environment. English is no longer privileged over the native languages of students and their families. Partnerships with parents and communities are developed and nourished to support the academic learning and social emotional development of their children.

Dover and Rodríguez-Valls (2022) argue that most English learners are **plurilingual** when they enter a U.S. classroom. They use their native languages but also know English at some level of proficiency, even though they are not fluent in English and are not comfortable using it in an academic setting. They use both or multiple languages concurrently, not as discrete and static systems of language. They enter the classroom with linguistic repertoires, even though they have not always been given credit for that knowledge and experience. Teachers should build on students' current linguistic repertoires to help them learn academic content while they build their skills in their native language and English. A part of this process honors **translanguaging**, in which students or adults authentically mix two or more languages known in their everyday conversations without adherence to the socially and politically defined boundaries of a specific language (Vallejo & Dooly, 2019). For instructional purposes, "enabling or facilitating students' translanguaging for meaning making can in fact help support their acquisition of new terms and concepts" (Hamman-Ortiz, 2019–2020).

HOW DO STUDENTS' GENDERS INTERACT WITH EDUCATION?

Students' sex and gender identities are affecting education in ways that are more transparent today than in the past. People, especially young people, do not always connect their gender to the sex they were assigned at birth. They don't see their sex or gender as fixed and unchangeable; they see it as fluid and flexible. They sometimes identify as both a man and a woman, **transgender**, agender, or many other labels that describe their **gender identity**. When students' gender does not conform to the traditional **binary** view of sex and gender, schools are forced to make decisions about what bathrooms students use, in what sports they can participate, and what names and pronouns are recognized. These decisions have become very politicized. Nonbinary and other gender-expansive students sometimes receive respect and support by educators in their schools but more often face discrimination and harassment. In this section, we explore gender identity, how gender is reflected in education, and how teachers can provide an equitable education for all students regardless of their gender identity.

Gender Identity or Expression

Sex is the term used to identify people as men or women based on biological differences, particularly their sexual organs at the time of birth. In the past, *gender* referred to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, and psychological traits generally associated with a person's sex, especially femininity and

masculinity. Not all people view gender as binary; it is considered more of a spectrum with many possibilities beyond the traditional concepts of sex and gender in which “gender identity is independent of biology and is a purely personal decision” (Schiappa, 2022, p. 1). The debate about the definition of women, men, and gender has been ongoing for decades among academicians and has become a public debate as transgender people are more open about their identity. Moving the discussion of gender beyond the binary divide to understanding gender as complex, multiple, intersectional, and fluid may better promote gender and sexual justice and liberation (Ryan, 2020).

The majority of the population continues to identify themselves as binary, either girl/woman or boy/man. But young people are much more likely to embrace a label other than **cisgender** (“cis”) or transgender men or women, with identities such as “**androgynous, gender fluid, gender bending, gender diverse, nonbinary, pangender,** and in general ‘**gender nonconformist**’” (Schiappa, 2022, p. 51, emphasis added). Not all transgender people are trans women or trans men, and not every trans person may be trying to assimilate into a target gender (Ryan, 2020). Not all people who are trans undergo medical transition or agree on viewpoints about their decision to transition (Schiappa, 2022). Identification outside the binary classification can result in stigma, discrimination, and even violence (Ryan, 2020). In the United States and other countries around the world, people who are cisgender have privilege and often are biased against people who are not cisgender. At the same time, not all people in the **LGBTQ+** community are accepting of members of the transgender community, especially the most marginalized members (Ryan, 2020).



The inclusion and support of students who are transgender, nonbinary, and/or other nonconforming genders are being contested in courts as state legislators, state boards of education, school boards, and principals enact antitrans legislation, policies, and practices.

Omaha World-Herald/Associated Press

Delivering Gender-Equitable Education

Schools historically reinforce society’s view of gender, which, at this time, primarily supports cisgender identities and enforces traditional gender norms (Mangin, 2020). Cis girls continue to be expected to display feminine traits and cis boys masculine traits. In school, girls are expected to be quieter and better behaved than boys. Girls are more likely than boys to be encouraged to break out of their stereotypical modes. Many parents today tell their daughters that they can be whatever they want. They play on sports teams, are the leaders in many school activities, and attend college at higher rates than boys. Women and girls may struggle to develop a balance between their femininity and their participation

in a masculine world. Trans students, on the other hand, are not always treated by educators and peers as the cis girls or cis boys with whom they identify. Trans girls and women are *not* encouraged to have any coded “masculine” traits at all, unlike their cisgender counterparts. Similarly, transgender boys and men are disparaged from showing any “feminine” coded traits. Teachers should accept the uniqueness of each student and be aware that their expectations for cis and trans students can lead to stereotyping that does not match the reality for students.

Young men are generally encouraged to be independent, assertive, leaders, self-reliant, and emotionally stable. The problem is that not all men fit the masculine stereotype. Some are empathic and caring, which are commonly recognized as feminine characteristics. The good news is that “masculine norms are changing in the United States” (Schiappa, 2022, p. 177). “Men are being allowed to be vulnerable, emotional human beings. This transition is hopeful and important, but painfully slow” (O’Neil, 2015, p. 10). At the same time, some young men are not adjusting well, as shown in the statistics on their high rates of suicide, binge drinking, and steroid use; they are also more likely to be victims of homicide and car crashes. They are less likely than girls to graduate from high school, attend college, and complete college, which suggests that interventions are needed in schools to improve gender equity in these areas (Reeves, 2022).

The problem with gender norms is that they reinforce and perpetuate inequity. Gender policing not only sends messages about the way cisgender boys and girls should behave but “also conveys that more expansive forms of **gender expression** are deviant or bad, leading many gender-nonconforming people to feel shame and self-hatred” (Mangin, 2020, p. 4). Teachers should be concerned about the academic performance of boys, girls, transgender, and other students who are nonbinary. They should be asking why so few girls are majoring in computer science and engineering in college, and they should be developing strategies for increasing their participation in those fields. The fact that boys are not performing as well on reading tests suggests that new strategies for involving them in reading and language arts are needed to ensure they are reading at grade level or above. Creating engaging activities that keep more young people in school and open academic fields such as Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) to more girls and students of color is another way to bring joy to your teaching. At the same time, teachers should be concerned about the effect of gender norms on students who are nonbinary. They should ensure that their classrooms make these students feel welcomed and that they do not learn to hate themselves because they don’t fit in the school’s gender norms (Mangin, 2020).

Professor Melinda M. Mangin (2020) challenges teachers to deliver gender equity by “trouble[ing] binary notions of gender and affirm[ing] transgender and gender-expansive identities” (p. 7). Teachers are expected to treat all students equitably and support academic growth for all of their students. Regardless of students’ gender identity, teachers have the responsibility to exhibit unconditional positive regard for students, recognize their special talents and needs, and provide a learning environment that fosters acceptance and understanding. Think about how many times teachers use the binary categories of “girl” or “boy” in the classroom and where nonbinary students would place themselves if they have to choose one of those categories. The affirmation of students’ gender identity is important in promoting the well-being of students. Teachers can affirm students’ identity by using their chosen names and pronouns and accepting their choice of clothing, toys, and activities (Mangin, 2020). Maintaining gender equity in classrooms requires teachers to monitor their use of gendered language and their creation of a gender-inclusive classroom environment and classroom management strategies. Teachers who are serious about changing gendered classrooms follow these practices whether or not students who identify as nonbinary are in their classrooms (Mangin, 2020).

Federal legislation governing elementary and secondary education includes Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which makes it illegal to treat students differently or separately on the basis of gender, which includes students who do not identify themselves as binary. It requires that all programs, activities, and opportunities offered by a school district be available equally to all students regardless of their gender identity.

UNDERSTANDING AND USING DATA

GRADUATION RATES AMONG STUDENTS FROM DIVERSE GROUPS

The Problem

Graduation from high school opens opportunities for young people that will make them eligible for postsecondary education and provide better chances for potential financial stability as adults. Although graduation rates have improved over time for all groups, differences still exist among racial and ethnic groups, young women and men, students with and without disabilities, English learners and English speakers, and students from affluent families and low-income families, as shown in Table 2.1. By reviewing the data in Table 2.1, you should be able to see the groups for which educational interventions are needed to achieve greater equity across all groups.

TABLE 2.1 ■ Public High School 4-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate (ACGR), by Selected Student Characteristics and Locale: 2019–2020

Locale	Total	Race/Ethnicity					Male	Female	Students With Disabilities	English Learner	Economically Disadvantaged
		White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native					
Total	87%	90%	81%	83%	93%	75%	79%	85%	71%	71%	81%
City	82%	86%	78%	78%	92%	64%	NA	NA	65%	68%	77%
Large	79%	84%	76%	77%	92%	61%	NA	NA	63%	67%	76%
Midsize	81%	85%	79%	77%	92%	64%	NA	NA	65%	67%	77%
Small	86%	89%	82%	82%	93%	72%	NA	NA	69%	73%	80%
Suburban	89%	92%	84%	83%	95%	79%	NA	NA	74%	72%	83%
Large	89%	92%	84%	83%	95%	81%	NA	NA	74%	72%	82%
Midsize	89%	91%	85%	86%	94%	80%	NA	NA	74%	77%	84%
Small	88%	90%	83%	85%	95%	68%	NA	NA	70%	76%	82%
Town	87%	89%	84%	83%	91%	77%	NA	NA	72%	75%	83%
Fringe	88%	90%	85%	85%	91%	79%	NA	NA	73%	75%	83%
Distant	88%	89%	85%	84%	92%	82%	NA	NA	71%	74%	83%
Remote	85%	88%	82%	81%	90%	74%	NA	NA	71%	76%	81%
Rural	90%	92%	88%	87%	94%	78%	NA	NA	76%	78%	85%
Fringe	91%	92%	88%	87%	95%	80%	NA	NA	75%	78%	85%
Distant	90%	91%	88%	86%	89%	85%	NA	NA	76%	79%	86%
Remote	88%	91%	84%	84%	87%	73%	NA	NA	79%	76%	85%

Source: [1] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2022c, June). Public high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate (ACGR), by selected student characteristics and locale: 2019-20 (Table 219.47). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_219.47.asp. [2] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2016, January). Public high school averaged freshman graduation rate (AFGR), by sex, race/ethnicity, and state or jurisdiction: 2012-13 (Table 219.40). https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d21/tables/dt21_219.40.asp

Interpreting the Data

The data in Table 2.1 report the high school 4-year adjusted cohort graduate rate (ACGR), which is “the percentage of public high school freshmen who graduate with a regular diploma or a state-defined alternate high school diploma for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities within 4 years of starting 9th grade” (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2022c, Note). Using the data in Table 2.1, answer the following questions:

1. Which racial and ethnic groups are most likely to graduate from high school? (Hint: Look at the total percentage for all students, and determine the groups with graduation rates higher than that for all students.)
2. Which racial or ethnic groups are less likely to graduate from high school? Based on what you learned in this chapter, what opportunity gaps are contributing to the lower graduation rates for these racial and ethnic groups?
3. Students of which sex are more likely to graduate from high school? What do you think contributes to this difference?
4. How do the graduation rates of students with disabilities, English Learners, and students who are economically disadvantaged compare with other students?
5. Students who live in which locales have a better chance of completing high school? How great are the differences across the locales (i.e., city, suburban, town, and rural area)?
6. What changes do you think could be made in schools to improve graduation rates for students who are less likely to finish high school at this time?

HOW IS SEXUAL ORIENTATION ADDRESSED IN SCHOOLS?

Discussions about sexual orientation are no longer hidden in society. In fact, 71% of the respondents to a Gallup poll support the legalization of same-sex marriages (McCarthy, 2022). The support for equal rights of gay and lesbian people has grown as cities, states, and school districts have expanded their policies on equality to include sexual orientation. Even with these changes, some school districts continue to struggle with how to handle diverse sexual orientations in the curricula and in student clubs. The uncertainty expressed by school districts is exacerbated by some outraged parents and state legislators who have passed laws over the past few years to limit the inclusion of LGBTQ+ content in school curricula and books read by children and youth (Young & Friedman, 2022).

Heterosexism continues to exist when people believe that sexual or romantic attraction to the opposite sex is the only acceptable sexual orientation, and all others are abnormal and morally wrong. This behavior can lead to discriminatory practices and harassment against people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ+) who continue to face discrimination in housing, employment, education, and other institutions. Heterosexism can result in violence against anyone who is identified by their assailer as LGBTQ+, which is still tolerated in some areas of the country and in some schools. The Trevor Project's 2021 National Survey on LGBTQ Youth Mental Health found that three in four LGBTQ youth had experienced discrimination based on their sexual orientation or gender identity at least once in their lifetime. Only one in three LGBTQ youth reported that their families affirmed their LGBTQ identities. More than 7 in 10 LGBTQ youth reported symptoms of mental health such as generalized anxiety disorder and major depressive disorder. Although counseling from a mental health professional may have been helpful, 16% of the youth did not want assistance and 48% wanted help but didn't get it. Two in five LGBTQ youth seriously considered suicide in the previous year, including more than half of transgender and nonbinary youth.

Sexual Orientation

What is sexual orientation? The American Psychological Association (2022) defines it as an “enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions of men to women or women to men (heterosexual), of women to women or men to men (homosexual), or by men or women to both sexes (bisexual)” (para. 1). The sexual orientation of the majority of the population is heterosexual, which historically has been the norm against which everyone else is measured. In a famous study of the sexual behavior of thousands of white adults in the 1940s and 1950s, Alfred Kinsey reported that 10% of the

males and 2% to 6% of the females were more or less exclusively homosexual (Kinsey Institute, 2022). Based on a 2021 Gallup Poll, 5.6% of the U.S. population identify as LGBTQ+, with 55% identifying as bisexual, 26% as gay, 12% as lesbian, 11% as transgender, and 3% as queer, same-gender-loving, or other identity. Young people born between 1997 and 2002 are four times as likely as members of Generation X (born 1965–1980) and eight times as likely as baby boomers (born 1946–1964) to indicate they are LGBTQ+ (Jones, 2021). It is not clear whether these generational differences are due to a shift in sexual orientation or a reflection that older people are less willing to identify as LGBT.

The term *gay* is sometimes used generically to refer to not only gay men but also lesbian women and bisexual people. The *Q* in LGBTQ+ refers to *queer*—a term used to negatively label gay and lesbian people in the past but that is now used as a political term that rejects **assimilation** into a heterosexual world. The *Q* can also mean *questioning*, to include individuals who are not sure of their sexual orientation. Terms related to sexual orientation and gender identification are always evolving. The “+” in LGBTQ+ refers to *two-spirit*, *intersex*, **asexual**, *pansexual*, *agender*, *gender queer*, *bigender*, *gender variant*, *pangender* (OK2BME, 2023) and other labels that people feel best reflect their sexual identity. As teachers work with students and adults, they should remember that it is important that students identify their own gender identity and sexual orientation and are not labeled by others. As a teacher, you should respect the self-identities of students, their family members, and colleagues and use the terms that people prefer, including the pronouns that they believe define them (Cleveland Clinic, 2022; OK2BME, 2023).

Many LGBTQ+ adults report feeling different from their siblings or peers from early in life. By the time they reach puberty, most students begin to feel an attraction to the same, opposite, or both sexes. Most students struggle with their identity during middle and high school (Kosciw et al., 2020). They may question their sexual feelings but not be sure if they are LGBTQ+. If they show signs of being LGBTQ+, even if they are not, they may be subjecting themselves to harassment or bullying by their classmates. During this period, they may feel isolated and might not know to whom they can turn for information and support, especially when their family will not accept their sexual orientation. LGBTQ+ students comprise a disproportionate percentage of homeless students on the nation's streets, in part because they are not accepted by their families.

Supporting LGBTQ+ Students

Gay is often used as a derogatory term against heterosexual students as well as a reference to students perceived to be LGBTQ+. When Amy Ashenden (2015) interviewed students about the meaning of *gay*, young people said that the term is also used to mean “alien, embarrassing, stupid, or wrong” (para. 17). Over 90% of LGBTQ+ students report hearing anti-LGBTQ+ remarks at school (Kosciw et al., 2020). This name-calling begins in elementary schools and increases as students move through school but appears to be most prevalent in middle schools (Kosciw et al., 2020). Harassment does not stop with verbal jabs. It also includes physical abuse, such as being pushed or shoved, and physical assault, such as being punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon. Thirty-four percent of LGBTQ+ students reported being physically harassed and 15% have been physically assaulted (Kosciw et al., 2020).

The data in The Trevor Project's (2021) national survey identifies the serious challenges that LGBTQ+ youth experience and



LGBTQ+ students report that schools feel much safer when they know there are safe zones and they can trust specific educators. Safe zone stickers and posters in the school signal a supportive school climate.

Education & Exploration 3/Alamy Stock Photo

urgently calls for better support for these young people. Teachers and other educators can play an important role in eliminating harassment and bullying related to students' sexual and gender identities as well as educating students to respect each other. Nearly 60% of LGBTQ+ students fear for their safety in schools, with nearly 7 in 10 of them being verbally harassed at school (Kosciw et al., 2020). If gay and lesbian students openly acknowledge their sexual orientation or appear to be LGBTQ+, they are likely to be harassed and face reprisals from peers and, sometimes, from school officials. School and school personnel do not always provide the same kind of support to LGBTQ+ students as they do to other students. Less than half of LGBTQ+ students reported that their school administration was somewhat or very supportive of them (Kosciw et al., 2020).

LGBTQ+ students feel more comfortable and safer in schools when faculty and staff are supportive; LGBTQ+ people are portrayed in the curricula; Gay–Straight Alliance, Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA), or similar club exists; and a comprehensive policy on harassment is enforced. When these conditions exist in a school, LGBTQ+ students are less likely to be verbally or physically harassed by their peers and more likely to find school staff responsive to them. Teachers may know little about LGBTQ history and experiences. They may have had few or no contacts with LGBTQ+ people who are out, or open about their sexual orientation. However, educators always have the responsibility to provide a safe environment for all students, which includes intervening when students are harassing their peers because of their sexual orientation, gender identification, or sex. In addition, LGBTQ+ students deserve to be respected and supported as all other students in schools and not punished and rejected for their sexual identity.

Contentious Issue: Teaching With Gag Orders

The content that teachers can teach about race, sex, national origin, ethnicity, LGBTQ+, religion, and U.S. history is being controlled in some states by gag orders issued by governors, state legislatures, and state boards of education. School districts are also proposing their own gag orders that prohibit what teachers can teach and the books that they can use and make available to students. A RAND Corporation survey found that one in four teachers report that school administrators have directed them “to limit discussions about political and social issues in class” (Woo et al., 2023, p. 3). The focus of these gag orders has been primarily on teaching about race and issues such as slavery if it places the United States in a negative light. Others don't want teachers discussing “divisive issues” or making students feel guilty about actions that their families may have been engaged in the past. Beginning with Florida's House Bill 1557, which is known as “Don't Say Gay” bill, states and school districts are increasingly focusing on issues related to LGBTQ+ identities. School districts are “barring LGBTQ+ pride flags or other political flags and symbols in schools, forbidding teachers from including pronouns in their email signatures, or even banning them from wearing rainbow-colored clothing” (Young & Friedman, 2022, para. 125).

How should teachers respond to these gag orders? First, they should be aware of the legislation in their state and the directives from their school district. Teachers unions and other teacher organizations should be a helpful resource in determining actions to be taken. The language of legislation and directives is often vague. Teachers in a school should review the exact language of legislation and district mandates. There are many ways to teach about the topics being prohibited so that teachers do not just give up and no longer teach these areas that have such great impact on students. For example, some laws ban the indoctrination of ideas or “compelling individuals to believe” certain things. However, teachers could teach multiple perspectives that allow students to make up their own minds (Sleeter, 2022). At the same time, many teachers along with parents, other educators, and local and national organizations are organizing to fight against these restrictions.

HOW DOES RELIGION AFFECT THE CLASSROOM?

Religion has a great influence on the values and lifestyles of families and plays an important role in the **socialization** of children and young people. Religious doctrines and practices guide how and when one worships, but they also guide beliefs about many aspects of daily life, including the roles of men and women, birth control, child rearing, friendships, perspectives on gender and sexual identity, and political attitudes. A religious doctrine can also dictate a family's expectations for teachers and schools. When the religious perspectives and school expectations differ, numerous challenges arise for educators.



The families of students practice many different religions. Educators should be sure they do not discriminate against students whose families practice a religion different from their own.

Geodd Manasse via Getty Images

Religious Diversity

The United States has strong Judeo-Christian roots. Some Christians believe that God led the European founders to establish this country as a Christian nation, which is reflected today in Christian nationalism—a belief that the United States is a Christian nation and that the government should ensure that it stays that way (Miller, 2021; Sanneh, 2023). An increase of Asian and Middle Eastern immigrants after the changes in the 1965 immigration law made the United States more religiously diverse. Mosques and temples have been built in communities that were formerly all Christian. Most urban and suburban areas are home to numerous religious groups and beliefs. Metropolitan areas may have a number of megachurches with thousands of members and their own schools. Students who attended private schools with a religious orientation in 2019 comprised 7.3% of the total school enrollment (U.S. Department of Education, NCES, 2021c, 2021d).

Almost 7 in 10 Americans identify themselves as Christian, with Protestants representing 41% of the population in 2022. Catholicism grew greatly after Southern and Eastern Europeans immigrated to the United States in the 20th century and now makes up 23% of the population. Two percent of the population is Jewish and 4% are Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Unitarian Universalist, and other religions (Public Religion Research Institute, 2023). Within all religious groups are liberal, moderate, and conservative or fundamentalist sects. The fundamentalist groups believe in the literal translation of their

holy documents (e.g., the Bible, Qur'an, and Torah). Liberal religions, on the other hand, accept the validity of diverse perspectives that have evolved from different historical experiences. Fourteen percent of the population describe themselves as white **evangelicals** (Public Religion Research Institute, 2023) and are often identified as members of the religious right.

Addressing Religion in Public Schools

In an urban or metropolitan area, teachers can expect to have students in their classrooms from a number of different religious groups. Even smaller midwestern and western towns have had an influx of Asian, African, or Middle Eastern immigrants who are bringing their cultural versions of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism to communities that previously had only a few different Christian denominations.

Accommodations will be needed in schools to respect the religious diversity of the community. Christian holidays are already acknowledged through school holidays and the singing of Christian songs at some school convocations. Jewish students will not attend school during Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Islamic students will fast during the month of Ramadan and are expected to have daily prayers. Policies that prevent the wearing of a hijab or yarmulke discriminate against Muslim women and Jewish men. School officials should involve the parents of their religious communities to provide professional development about their religious traditions and cultures as well as advice for guaranteeing that the civil rights of their children are not violated.

Religion is very important to some families and of little or no importance to others. In some communities, religion plays a major role in the lives of families, requiring attendance not only on a specific day but also at services and activities throughout the week. Religious stories reinforce the values of the religion in Sunday school, Bible classes, and other organized religious education programs. Parents in these communities may expect schools to reflect those same values, sometimes enrolling their children in private Catholic, Jewish, Islamic, or Christian schools that reinforce their values and teach their religious doctrine. They may decide to homeschool their children to ensure they are not exposed to values of which they disapprove.

Students whose religious beliefs differ from the majority in the community may be ostracized in school and social settings. Jews, atheists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostals, Muslims, and Sikhs are among the groups whose members are sometimes shunned, suffer discrimination, and are victims of violence in the United States. Antisemitism has increased over the past 5 years, with a 36% increase in 2022 from 2021, including a rabbi and three congregants being taken hostage in a Texas synagogue. In schools, some students draw swastikas and threaten Jewish students by harassing and bullying them (Anti-Defamation League, 2023). Educators must be careful that their own religious beliefs do not interfere with their ability to provide equal educational opportunities to students whose families are members of other religious groups.

CONNECTING TO THE CLASSROOM

This chapter has introduced you to the students who are likely to be in your classrooms of the future. We have examined the diversity of their group memberships based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status (SES), language, gender, sexual orientation, and religion. Below are some key principles for applying the information in this chapter to the classroom.

1. Students should see their ethnic and racial backgrounds and experiences reflected throughout the school's curricula. Teachers should respect the cultural backgrounds of their students, families, and communities, and classroom instruction should be relevant and meaningful to the lives of students.
2. Teachers should be aware of biases they have about students based on their SES and ensure they have high academic expectations for all of their students.
3. Schools should respect, value, and support students' bilingualism and multilingualism as they teach English to English learners and provide them full access to the curriculum.
4. Young people are more often than in the past identifying their gender as nonbinary, breaking the rigid structure of being either a boy or girl and pushing the education system to recognize and affirm their gender as they identify it.

5. Students who are LGBTQ+ generally do not see themselves in the curriculum and are more likely than their heterosexual peers to be harassed in school. They feel more comfortable and safer in schools when faculty and staff support them and safe climates are created for them, including the availability of groups such as Gay-Straight Alliance or Gender and Sexuality Alliances.
6. Teachers should be aware of the religious groups to which their students belong, respect the religious diversity of their students and families, and make accommodations as appropriate in their classrooms.

KEY TERMS

Achievement gap	Heterosexism
Androgynous	Indigenous
Asexual	LGBTQ+
Assimilation	McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act
Binary	Multilingual
Cisgender	Naturalized citizens
Civil rights	Nonbinary
Colorblind	Opportunity gaps
Couch surfing	Pan-ethnic
Cultural capital	Pangender
Culturally responsive teaching	Plurilingual
Cultures	Race
Disability	Racism
Ethnicity	Refugees
Evangelical	Self-fulfilling prophecy
Feminists	Sex
Gender	Sexual orientation
Gender bending	Socialization
Gender diverse	Socioeconomic status (SES)
Gender expression	Stereotypes
Gender fluid	Tracking
Gender identity	Transgender
Gender nonconformist	Translanguaging

CLASS DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The curricula of many schools privilege European American culture and history. How will you ensure that the cultures and histories of diverse groups will be incorporated into the curricula? Why should all students know about the cultures and histories of other ethnic and racial groups as well as their own?
2. Half of K–12 students are eligible for Free or Reduced-Price Lunch, indicating that their families have low incomes. What impact does poverty have on the education and health of students? What accommodations will you make so that the curriculum is more relevant and meaningful for students from low-income families?
3. More than one in five students has one or more foreign-born parents, many of whom speak a language other than English at home. Schools generally use bilingual education or ESL to help students learn English. Which program do you think more effectively serves the need of students and families in your community, and why?
4. Students at all ages are identifying their gender by many labels other than girls and boys. How can you ensure that all students, regardless of their gender identities, are being affirmed and supported in your classroom so that they develop positive self-identities and are not stigmatized by other students?

5. Many LGBTQ+ students feel isolated in schools because teachers, students, and counselors do not understand them and provide little or no support for them. What role are you willing to take to support the psychological and emotional development of LGBTQ+ students?
6. Religion can influence what families think should be taught in schools. In some religious communities, evolution and sexuality are taboo topics. How will you know how important a role religious groups have in the community in which you are teaching?

SELF-ASSESSMENT

What Is Your Current Level of Understanding Today's Students?

One of the indicators of understanding is to examine how complex your thinking is when asked questions that require you to use the concepts and facts introduced in this chapter.

Answer the following questions as fully as you can. Then use the Assessing Your Learning (Table 2.2) rubric to self-assess the degree to which you understand and can use the ideas presented in this chapter.

1. How can you bring the cultures of your students into the classroom?
2. What impact does the socioeconomic status of students' families have on teachers' expectations for the academic performance of students?
3. What is the teacher's responsibility for teaching students who are not authorized to be in the country?
4. How can the potential of students be limited with education that focuses on the stereotypical roles and norms of men and women?
5. What can teachers do to help LGBTQ+ students feel safe in school?
6. What are some ways in which the religious diversity of a community can be integrated into your classroom?

ASSESSING YOUR LEARNING RUBRIC

TABLE 2.2 ■ Assessing Your Learning Rubric

	Parts & Pieces	Unidimensional	Organized	Integrated	Extensions
Indicators	Elements/ concepts are talked about as isolated and independent entities. Some important names are provided in isolation.	One or a few concepts are addressed, while others are underdeveloped, or not mentioned.	Deliberate and structured consideration of all key concepts/ elements.	All key concepts/ elements are included in a view that addresses interconnections.	Integration of all elements and dimensions, with extrapolation to new situations.
Relationships between the diversity of students and teaching and learning	Identifies the types of student diversity that exist without being able to explain the relationships to teaching and learning.	Describes a few of the impacts that diversity has on teaching and learning.	Provides examples of how student diversity can influence teaching and learning across cultural groups.	Analyzes the role of the teacher in effectively integrating student diversity in curriculum and instruction to help students learn.	Explains how teachers can adjust their teaching to positively integrate student diversity in curriculum and instruction to improve learning across cultural groups and develops a plan for increasing their knowledge about cultural groups with which they have limited knowledge.

FIELD GUIDE

For Learning More About . . . Today's Students

To further increase your understanding about today's students, do one or more of the following activities listed in Table 2.3.

Ask a Teacher or Principal	Ask one or more of the teachers in the schools you are observing how they differentiate their instruction to serve students from different ethnic, racial, socioeconomic, and language groups. What are their greatest concerns about providing equity across groups? What do they suggest that you do to prepare to work in a school with diverse student populations?
Make Your Own Observations	When observing a classroom, record how many times the teacher uses “girl” or “boy” in discussions and directions to students. Analyze how students who identify as gender nonconformists or nonbinary are fitting comfortably and safely into a classroom that rigidly reinforces binary identities.
What Are Your Concerns About Assessing Learning?	The major theme of this chapter is to introduce you to the diversity of students who may enter your classroom throughout your teaching career with recommendations for incorporating their cultural histories and experiences into the curriculum and your instruction and for supporting each student. What are your concerns about how you will use information about the diversity of your students in your teaching? <i>(Write out your concerns using complete sentences. Do not just make a list.)</i>
Build Your Portfolio	The degree of diversity at a school differs greatly across the country. Choose a school in the community in which your university is located or in which you grew up and describe the cultural makeup of the community and student population in the school, including individuals' racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, religious, and language backgrounds. Schools or school districts should have policies on the provision of safety for students. Compare the policies in two school districts and determine what students are included in the policies. Describe how the policies incorporate LGBTQ+ students.
Read a Book	For ideas on concrete, doable, and meaningful ways that teachers can create Black-affirming spaces in schools, read <i>Anti-Blackness at School: Creating Affirming Educational Spaces for African American Students</i> by Joi A. Spencer and Kerri Ullucci (Teachers College Press, 2022). Matt Kay, a founding teacher of English at the Science Leadership Academy in Philadelphia, provides recommendations for initiating and facilitating meaningful, productive dialogues about race in classrooms in his book, <i>Not Light, but Fire: How to Lead Meaningful Race Conversations in the Classroom</i> (Stenhouse, 2018). Wondering how to effectively create a classroom that affirms the gender identities of girls, boys, transgender students, and nonbinary students? Melinda M. Mangin's book, <i>Transgender Students in Elementary School: Creating an Affirming and Inclusive School Culture</i> (Harvard Education Press, 2020), will be a helpful resource.
Search the Web	Learning for Justice: To learn more about incorporating diversity into the curricula and developing a classroom climate that supports students from diverse groups, visit https://www.learningforjustice.org/ . Native Knowledge 360 Degrees (NK360°): Looking for resources for incorporating Native Americans into the curriculum? Visit https://americanindian.si.edu/nk360 from the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian. Zinn Education Project: To access lessons and articles for the teaching of people's history in middle and high school classrooms, visit https://www.zinnedproject.org/ . Rethinking Schools: To help you think about the issues raised in this chapter and read how teachers are addressing them in their classrooms, visit the website of Rethinking Schools (https://rethinkingschools.org/).

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