MEETING THE NEEDS OF CULTURALLY DIVERSE LEARNERS IN FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

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The purpose of this study was to examine the extent of cultural and linguistic diversity among students in Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) middle school classrooms and explore how FCS teachers meet the needs of their diverse learners. Sixteen teachers in seven Florida school districts participated in this research study by completing a 6-part survey questionnaire. Participants indicated that in their most diverse class, 40% and 29% of the students were Latino and African American respectively, while 15% were White. All 16 teachers reported that they modify their teaching practices in diverse classrooms and that visual aids, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and alternative assessments were highly effective and frequently used strategies when working with diverse learners. Implications of the results are discussed.

Changing demographics in the U.S. have had a major impact on the nation's schools. Classrooms across America are filled with an unprecedented mixture of cultures, languages, and national backgrounds, reflecting the largest influx of minority and immigrant students since the beginning of the century (Banks, 1997). Demographers predict the trend to continue throughout the next decade with the greatest student population growth expected among Latino and Asian and Pacific Islander students, projected to increase by 30 and 39%, respectively (Crandall, Jaramillo, Olsen, & Peyton, 2001). The number of students designated as limited-English proficient, many of whom are immigrants, has risen dramatically and represents more than 100 different language groups (Lessow-Hurley, 2003). Approximately 14 percent of the nation's school age youth speak a first language other than English (Banks, 2002). Despite an increasingly multicultural student population, approximately 90% of teachers are white (National Education Association, 2002). These astounding facts demand that teachers be prepared to work with students who do not share the same language, culture, or national background (Crandall et al., 2001).

As teachers encounter an increasingly heterogeneous group of students, they will need to acquire new knowledge, attitudes, and skills to be effective in multicultural classrooms (Banks, 1997). Because many teachers are apprehensive and uncertain about working with students from culturally different backgrounds (Adams, Sewell, & Hall, 2004), they must learn culturally appropriate pedagogy that is sensitive and responsive to the differing backgrounds of students (Banks, 1997; Banks & Banks, 1999; Hefflin, 2002). Due to cultural and social circumstances, diverse learners bring differing experiences and knowledge to the educational setting, and therefore have unique needs and varied preferences for learning. Conventional teaching approaches, such as textbook and lecture-dominated instruction, have not been found to be

effective or congruent with the learning styles of students from culturally diverse backgrounds (Carbo, 1995). To successfully address the needs of these learners, teachers must alter teaching practices, vary instructional materials, and tailor assessment instruments to the specific needs of their students from varied cultural groups (Carbo, 1995; Darling, 2005).

Review of Literature

Research suggests that today's educators must implement sound, research-based strategies that recognize the needs, strengths, and experiences of students from diverse backgrounds and cultures (Saravia-Shore & Garcia, 1995; Hodges, 2001). Reviews of the literature on culturally responsive teaching have found that cooperative/collaborative learning experiences improve academic performance and encourage socialization skills for all students, particularly for students from diverse backgrounds (Johnson & Johnson, 1990). Peer tutoring has also been effective in promoting student-to-student interaction in multicultural classrooms (Webb, 1988). Active learning experiences and hands-on activities including simulations, games, role-playing, field trips, and laboratory experiences engage and intrinsically motivate all students while accommodating the many different learning styles of multicultural learners (Kline, 1995). Finally, researchers have documented the value of multiple and alternative assessments when working with diverse learners and substantiate that assessment techniques must be compatible with and relevant to the cultural backgrounds, learning styles, and life experiences of all students (Banks & Banks, 1999; Saravia-Shore & Garcia, 1995; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

Accommodating the needs of multicultural learners has and will continue to create challenges for teachers (Hodges, 2001). However, for teachers at the middle school level who deal with students who are undergoing dramatic physical, cognitive, and social transitions, the needs of culturally diverse learners will create even more challenges in the classroom (McLeod, 1996). Middle school teachers who help young adolescents confront the maturational changes associated with puberty and deal with transformations that occur in relationships with parents (Steinberg, 1981), may also find themselves helping young multicultural students deal with issues involving the formation of their cultural identity, cultural conflict in the home, and pressure from culturally and racially different peers (Garcia Coll, Lamberty, Jenkins, McAdoo, Crnic, Wasik & Garcia, 1996; Smetana & Gaines, 1999). As teachers at the middle level address the unique developmental concerns and academic needs of their students who may be from culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse backgrounds, it will be imperative for them to be knowledgeable about the students they serve and the values, beliefs, and backgrounds of their families (Darling, 2005; Greenwood, Darling, Hansen-Gandy, 1997).

The reality of increasingly multicultural and multilingual diversity in the nation's classrooms (Crandall et al., 2001) is particularly evident in FCS classes which regularly attract students from diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds (Forrest & Alexander, 2004; Rehm, 2004). As a result, cultural diversity issues have been incorporated into the FCS National Standards (1998) and have been recognized as an area of critical concern in the family and consumer sciences profession (Adams et al., 2004). Further, diverse populations of students in FCS classrooms will require teachers to develop and implement instructional strategies that are effective with diverse learners (Adams et al., 2004). However, little is known about the nature and extent of the diversity typically experienced in FCS classrooms. Furthermore, there is little information available regarding the strategies being implemented by FCS teachers and perceived to be effective with multicultural learners. Information about the attitudes of FCS teachers towards diversity and the practices used to accommodate the needs of students from various

backgrounds is important in creating a learning environment that is responsive to culturally diverse students (Adams et al., 2004; Allison, 2003; Forrest and Alexander, 2004; Greenwood et al., 1997). Therefore, the goal of this study was to begin to fill this void of information on the racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity confronting FCS teachers and explore how these teachers are meeting the needs of their diverse learners in multicultural classrooms.

Middle school classrooms in the State of Florida were chosen for this purpose because students are required to take FCS courses at the middle school level and because Florida is considered to be a bellwether state whose population trends typify and forecast the increasing cultural diversity in the nation (Greenwood et al., 1997). Currently, 50.2% of the students in Florida's public schools belong to an ethnic minority with the Hispanic population comprising 21.7% of the student population (Florida Department of Education, 2004). Additionally, more than half the children in Florida speak a language other than English and it is not uncommon to find 30 different languages spoken by families of school-age children (Darling, Greenwood, & Hansen-Gandy, 1994). To prepare for the substantial diversity in Florida classrooms, all teachers in the state and students in teacher education programs are required to have additional instruction in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The present study will contribute initial data on (a) the extent of racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity of students in middle school classrooms in Florida, (b) strategies employed by FCS middle school teachers in their diverse classrooms, along with judgments of the effectiveness of the strategies being employed, and (c) teachers' assessments of their experiences in teaching diverse students, including modifications they have made in their teaching to enhance the learning experience in multicultural classrooms.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 16 FCS teachers who taught in different middle schools in various cities across the State of Florida. All the teachers were female and had been teaching for an average of 15 years (ranging from 2 years to more than 20 years). The courses they were currently teaching—including the FCS Exploratory Wheel, Life Choices, Personal Development, and Teen Challenges—are required courses at the middle level in Florida.

Teacher Selection Process

Teachers were selected via a recruitment process involving FCS district supervisors across the State of Florida. Supervisors were chosen to assist in teacher selection because these leaders are in regular contact with their FCS teachers, providing support and information to them throughout the school year in their respective school districts. Further, FCS district supervisors meet several times a year to share ideas and address statewide issues. The researchers believed that teachers would be more likely to complete a survey if requested by their district supervisor than they would to a mailed survey from a researcher. To this end, one of the researchers attended a FCS State Supervisors' meeting, discussed the research project with the supervisors who were present, and requested that they distribute surveys to the FCS teachers in their respective districts. FCS supervisors from 14 (out of 67 counties) requested and were provided with 310 surveys. A total of 83 surveys were returned to the researchers, yielding a return rate of 26.8% (if all 310 surveys were distributed). Sixteen surveys were completed by middle school teachers and their responses served as the bases for this study.

Surveys were received from teachers in seven different school districts representing diverse areas of the state, including smaller-rural and larger-urban communities in Central Florida, South Florida, and Gulf Coast regions of the state. Further, and importantly, the non-white minority representation of students in the participating classrooms averaged 48.43%, a number that closely matched the 50.20% non-white minority populations of students in Florida's public schools (Florida Department of Education, 2004). This sampling procedure was purposive, which is an appropriate and potentially validity-enhancing strategy to meet research goals (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). While it can't be documented that this group of participating teachers was representative of all FCS middle school teachers in the state, the process resulted in the participation of experienced middle school FCS teachers from geographically and culturally diverse school districts across the State of Florida with minority populations of students that were comparable to those found in the average school district in the State. It was expected that the experiences and views of this group of teachers would provide a valuable, albeit preliminary, portrait of the extent of cultural diversity in the "typical" Florida FCS middle school classroom and the impact of the substantial and increasing diversity on pedagogical strategies and practices used in these classrooms.

Instrument

In order to obtain information on classroom diversity and learn more about the experiences of teachers in diverse middle school classrooms, the authors developed a 6-part survey questionnaire, *Teaching Culturally Diverse Students Survey Questionnaire,* consisting of both open-ended and closed-form questions. The survey was based on a conceptual framework presented by Banks (1996), referred to as "teacher's positionality," and is defined as the goals, knowledge, beliefs, strategies, and other normative frames of reference of a teacher which significantly impact the learning experiences of diverse students in multicultural classrooms. Key features of "teacher's positionality" assessed in this study included teachers' personal interest in cultures, level of and desire for more knowledge about cultures, adaptations in teaching strategies and beliefs about the effectiveness of strategies in meeting the needs of culturally diverse students. Clear directions and an explanation of the purpose of the survey were presented at the beginning of the instrument, and to increase the instrument's reliability, items were written in a straight-forward manner using phrasing and language familiar to teachers. In order to enhance validity, the survey was pilot tested with three FCS middle school teachers who provided feedback about how well they understood the questions. Modifications to the instrument were made based on the feedback and critical comments of this pilot group of teachers. Finally, three FCS education experts (University Professors) scrutinized the instrument for added reliability and validity in measuring the dimensions under study (Leedy & Ormond, 2005). Changes were made based on their comments.

Part 1 of the instrument included demographic questions about the participating teachers, including gender, racial, and ethnic background, years taught, courses currently being taught, and languages spoken. Part 2 asked participants to identify and provide information about the "most diverse class" they teach or have recently taught, including the culture(s) represented and the languages spoken in this class. Participants were also invited to make comments about their most diverse class. In Part 3, respondents were asked if they had taught classes specifically identified as "ESOL" classes (an acronym used in Florida to designate classes that teach "English to Speakers of Other Languages") and if so, to provide information about the number of students, cultures represented, and languages spoken by the students in these classes. Part 4

consisted of a 20-item checklist designed to identify classroom practices that teachers have had to alter in order to achieve their goals when teaching diverse students. The teachers were also given the option to offer open-ended comments about their classroom practices. Descriptive statistics were used to portray the characteristics of the teachers (Part 1), characteristics of students in their "most diverse class" and "ESOL class" (Part 2 and 3), and the modifications teachers made when teaching diverse students (Part 4). Part 5 asked respondents to rate six aspects of their experiences in diverse classrooms using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 *(not applicable or nonexistent)* to 5 *(very high degree)*, and included questions pertaining to their knowledge and fascination about cultures, changes they have made in teaching diverse students, experiences with the parents of their students, and their desire for additional training to work effectively with diverse students. Finally, Part 6 asked teachers to assess the effectiveness of a variety of teaching strategies via a 6-point rating scale, ranging from 0 *(have not used)* to 5 *(very highly effective),* and to identify other strategies they have found to be effective when teaching diverse learners. Mean ratings were calculated for each item in Part 5 and 6 in order to represent 1) the extent to which teachers endorsed specific beliefs, attitudes, and experiences (Part 5), and 2) teachers' judgments of the degree of effectiveness of varying strategies employed with diverse learners in multicultural classrooms (Part 6).

Results

Background of Participating Teachers

The participating FCS teachers in this study were very experienced teachers on the whole, with an average of 15 years in the classroom. Nearly half of the participants ($n = 7$) had 20 or more years of teaching experience, seven teachers had been teaching between 6 and 15 years, and two teachers had taught between 2 and 5 years. The participants were predominantly Caucasian ($n = 13$), with one Latino and one of Native American/Caucasian ancestry. All the teachers were fluent in English, but one teacher also spoke Spanish and six teachers stated that they could understand Spanish, but in varying degrees.

Information Regarding Classroom Diversity

The student population in the "most diverse" classrooms in this study consisted of a mix of races, ethnic, and cultural groups. In an average class of 23 students, Latinos and African Americans were the largest groups represented, 40% and 29%, respectively. The Latino group was quite diversified, with students of Puerto Rican (17%), Mexican, (13%), Cuban (6%), and South American (4%) ancestry represented, especially Colombia and Brazil. In addition, the class included Asian students (8%) from primarily Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese backgrounds, Caribbean Islanders (4%), Haitians (3%), and Native Americans (1%). In the most diverse class, 15% of the students were European American, or White. Teachers reported that the two primary languages spoken by the students in their most diverse class were English and Spanish. However, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, Haitian and Haitian Creole, German, Japanese, Portuguese, Albanian, Lithuanian, Mandarin, Romanian, and French were languages also spoken in their classrooms.

To obtain further information about diversity in the classroom, respondents were asked to share comments about their most diverse class. Several teachers remarked that student behavior was problematic (e.g., speaking loud and out of turn, getting out of seats without permission, encroaching on other's personal space), while other teachers commented on the difficulties associated with teaching students who could speak little or no English. One of the two teachers

who had previously taught an ESOL class commented that this class was her biggest challenge as a first-year teacher.

A majority of the participants mentioned that teachers must be very open and accepting of the values, beliefs, and traditions of students in culturally diverse classrooms and that students often have apprehension about working with others who are different. Teachers also suggested the need to be supportive and encouraging, while providing opportunities for students to learn about the cultures of their classmates and appreciate one another. Teaching students to respect each other was mentioned as critical to diffuse ignorance and promote tolerance.

Instructional Modifications Related to Teaching Diverse Students

Table 1 identifies the extent to which teachers have altered 20 different aspects of the teaching process in diverse classrooms. All 16 teachers reported that they alter various practices when teaching diverse learners. For the great majority of teachers, many modifications were reported, including how to give instructions for assignments, word and language usage, strategies used in teaching, grading/testing procedures, standards and expectations for students, classroom organization (i.e., seating arrangements, grouping students), time allocation for assignments, how to motivate students, and working with parents. Fewer teachers reported having to make changes in such matters as homework assignments, textbook and reading materials, topics or units taught, time preparing lessons, and giving make-up work to students.

Table 1
Teaching Practices Altered When Teaching Diverse Students

Practices	Number of Teachers Indicating Change in Practice *N*
The way you give instructions for assignments	16
Seating arrangements or assignments	15
Strategies used to present information	15
Grading/testing procedures	15
Time allotted for assignments during class	14
How you put students in groups or pairs	14
Communicating and interacting with students	14
Standards or expectations for your students	13
Amount of time devoted to working with students one on one	13
Choice of words or language used in the classroom	11
Length and timing of lessons	10
Involvement with parents	9
Motivating students to learn or participate	9
Classroom rules and discipline	8
How you handle inappropriate behavior	8
Giving make-up work for students who are absent	7
Time spent preparing lessons	7
Subject matter, topics, and units that you teach	6
Textbooks and choice of reading materials	4
Homework assignments	4

Teaching Diverse Students: Beliefs and Attitudes of Teachers

       The responses (mean ratings) of the middle school teachers to six questions assessing their experiences in working with culturally diverse students are presented in Table 2. The results indicate that the teachers are highly fascinated to learn about new cultures ($M = 4.69$), but they are only moderately knowledgeable about the background and cultures of their students ($M = 3.31$). Teachers strongly believe they have had to alter their teaching strategies to accommodate diverse learners ($M = 4.00$), but that working with diverse students has moderately impacted their ability to meet classroom goals ($M = 3.38$). There was considerable agreement that they need and want additional training in learning how to teach diverse students ($M = 3.67$). Finally, teachers indicated that they had relatively little contact with the parents of their diverse students ($M = 2.69$).

Table 2
Beliefs and Attitudes of Teachers in Diverse Classrooms

Beliefs/Attitudes	M
Are you fascinated to learn about other cultures?	4.69
Have you had to alter your teaching strategies to accommodate diverse learners?	4.00
Do you desire additional training in learning how to teach diverse students?	3.67
Have you found that working with diverse students has impacted your ability to meet your classroom goals?	3.38
Do you believe you are knowledgeable about the background and cultures of your students?	3.31
Have you worked with the parents of your students?	2.69

Note. Mean score based on range of 1 (not applicable) to 5 (very high degree).

Effectiveness of Teaching Strategies

       In terms of the effectiveness of varying strategies employed by these middle school teachers in diverse classrooms (presented in Table 3), four practices were rated as being highly effective: use of visuals ($M = 4.44$), peer tutoring ($M = 4.19$), cooperative learning ($M = 4.06$), and using alternative methods of assessment to evaluate students ($M = 4.00$). Role playing or skits to solve real-life problems or see the perspective of others were judged to be moderately effective ($M = 3.07$).

       Interestingly, the use of dual language printed materials and guest speakers representing the cultures of the students in the class were only slightly effective ($M = 2.21$ and 2.13, respectively). Field trips ($M = 1.92$) and inviting parents to visit and participate in the class ($M = 1.80$) were judged to be generally less effective or ineffective. The strategy rated as the least effective practice by the participants in this study was case studies reflecting the real-life experiences of diverse students in the class ($M = 1.58$).

Table 3
Perceived Effectiveness of Teaching Strategies with Diverse Learners

Strategies	*M*
Visuals	4.44
Peer Tutoring	4.19
Cooperative Learning	4.06
Role playing or skits to solve real-life problems or see other's perspectives	4.00
Dual language printed materials or other resources	3.07
Guest speakers representing the cultures of your students	2.21
Field trips	2.13
Inviting parents to visit and participate in classroom activities	1.92
Case studies reflecting culturally specific or real-life scenario's of diverse students	1.80
Visuals	1.58

Note. Mean score based on range of 0 (have not used) to 5 (very highly effective).

Discussion

These findings provide valuable preliminary information about the extent and nature of diversity within FCS middle school classrooms in Florida, including alterations in instructional and classroom practices made in response to classroom diversity, assessments of the effectiveness of various teaching strategies, and overall attitudes and beliefs of teachers about their experiences in culturally diverse classes. The great majority of students in the "most diverse" class targeted in this study were racial-ethnic minority students, totaling 85% of the class on average. Nearly 70% of these students were Latino (40%) and African American (29%), with the remaining 15% consisting of students reflecting Asian, Caribbean Island, Haitian, and Native American cultural heritages. The Latino group itself was quite diversified, with students from Puerto Rican, Mexican, Cuban, and South American backgrounds. While most of the teachers spoke only English, there was a multiplicity of languages spoken by students in these classe including Spanish and a number of other languages and dialects. The magnitude of the cultural and language diversity in these classrooms, differences manifested not only between the groups but also within groups, makes evident the substantial pedagogical challenges confronting the FCS teachers in this study. Such challenges clearly extend beyond classrooms in Florida, given the ever increasing diversification of the population in the U.S. (Lessow-Hurley, 2003; U.S. Census, 2004).

As would be expected from dedicated and experienced educators, all of the FCS teachers in this study acknowledged that they modified their classroom practices when teaching diverse students. Teachers indicated that they made adjustments in how they communicated with students, including modifications when giving instructions, words and language used in the classroom, strategies used to present information, and means of interacting with their students. A majority of the participants indicated that because students of similar backgrounds feel more comfortable with each other and tend to band together in diverse classrooms, they frequently modify seating arrangements and assignments. Research has found that activities and seating assignments that encourage students to communicate and interact with other students in the classroom help to break down barriers among diverse learners and develop cross-cultural understanding and friendships while also assisting English language learners (Crandall, 1999; Slavin, 1990).

Teachers in this study reported that they altered grading and testing procedures, and even performance standards and expectations for their students. The research on "teacher expectancy effects" demonstrates that teachers must maintain high standards for all students and believe that every student, regardless of their background, can succeed (Banks, 2002; Saravia-Shore & Garcia, 1995). In addition, recent attention on the need for alternative assessment practices, especially in classrooms comprised of students from diverse backgrounds (Banks & Banks, 1999; Snowman & Biehler, 2003), validates the practices of teachers in this study.

Most of the teachers made changes in the amount of time they allotted for class assignments, length and timing of lessons, and amount of time devoted to working with individual learners in their diverse classes. One teacher added that multicultural classes move slower than other classes and another teacher lamented that the extra time spent working with limited-English students often reduced the amount of learning time for other students in the class. Because these issues create frustration and anxiety for both teachers and students, teachers need to be open to pacing lessons and providing ample time for students to complete assignments and express themselves, important practices for teachers who work with diverse learners, especially learners who are linguistically diverse (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003).

At least half of the teachers indicated that diverse classrooms require new and creative ways to motivate students, establish rules, maintain and enforce discipline (especially in response to inappropriate behavior), and involve parents in the learning process. Also, a number of teachers testified to having to make adjustments in the subject matter, topics, and units they teach; choice of textbooks and reading materials; homework assignments; and providing make-up work for absent students. In short, culturally and linguistically diverse students will require that teachers be prepared to modify their approaches to teaching and classroom management and exercise flexibility, creativity, and resiliency in these classrooms (McLeod, 1996; Saravia-Shore & Garcia, 1995; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003).

Amazingly, despite the daily demands made on the FCS teachers in this study in their diverse classrooms, the continuing need to alter teaching and classroom management strategies and their limited knowledge about the background and cultures of their students, these teachers remained highly interested in learning about new cultures. They also expressed a desire to gain additional training in learning how to teach diverse students. Hence, they remained positive and committed to the goal of enhancing the learning experiences for all their students regardless of race, ethnicity, or cultural background, a commendable and important attribute for teaching multilingual and multicultural students (Banks, 2002; Crandall et al., 2001).

A major purpose of this study was to identify and assess the effectiveness of strategies being employed by FCS teachers to meet the needs of their diverse learners. The use of visuals, such as pictures and teaching aids, was identified as the most effective strategy by the participants in this study. Visuals and hands-on materials can assist in teaching about concepts through the use of a variety of senses (Bruno, 1982) and have been found to be especially helpful to students whose first language is not English (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003; Wood & Tinajero, 2002). Also judged to be effective was the use of alternative forms of assessments in evaluating the performance of ethnically and racially diverse students, a practice supported by other scholars in the field (Banks & Banks, 1999; Snowman & Biehler, 2003). Peer tutoring (which pairs two students of differing abilities and backgrounds together) and cooperative learning (where students are put in heterogeneous groups of five or six to complete an assigned task) were also rated as highly effective by teachers in this study. These findings are consistent with the research which indicates that heterogeneous grouping of students improves academic

performance and develops communication skills (Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Saravia-Shore & Garcia, 1995). In addition, these are strongly recommended strategies for teachers who work with linguistically and culturally diverse students, particularly Latino and African American students, as they promote inter-ethnic friendships (Saravia-Shore & Garcia, 1995; Snowman & Biehler, 2003).

The use of role playing and skits was identified as a moderately effective strategy by the participants in their diverse classrooms. These strategies, in addition to case studies which participants reported as an ineffective strategy, are examples of simulated experiences and can help students find solutions to real life problems. However, because they often deal with personal situations (Chamberlain & Cummings, 2003), teachers in this study may be uncomfortable in incorporating these strategies in classrooms where they know little about the real life experiences of their diverse students.

Strategies judged to be generally less effective or ineffective by the participants included the use of dual language printed materials, guest speakers, field trips, and parent involvement. It should be pointed out, however, that previous research has shown that both guest speakers and field trips can be very effective teaching strategies in diverse classrooms, providing ways for students to experience realistic situations, apply practical knowledge, and connect with the community (Chamberlain & Cummings, 2003). However, circumstances, scheduling, and cost factors may prohibit their use in some school districts.

With regard to parent involvement, several teachers commented that parents are not willing to participate and do not want to get involved in school activities. Research has substantiated that minority parents often feel intimidated in the school environment and apprehensive about becoming involved in the education of their child (Banks & Banks, 1999; Davis, 1995). Because a child's success in school is positively related to the degree to which teachers involve the families of students in the educational process, teachers must reach out to parents in culturally sensitive ways (Pai & Adler, 2001; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003). Parental involvement is especially salient at the middle school level to help young adolescents succeed academically and personally at a transitional time in life (Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1989; National Middle School Association, 2003). As classrooms become more diverse, it will be even more important to build bridges between the home and school environment and find creative ways to increase parental involvement (Allison, 2003; Allyn, 2004; Clark & Clark, 2005).

Conclusion

In conclusion, classrooms in America will continue to reflect the increasing diversification of the U.S. population as the number of students from racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse backgrounds grow. This study of 16 middle school classrooms in Florida offers
a profile of classrooms in which students of color predominated, especially Latino and African American students, with European American or White students in the clear minority. While this profile may not represent middle school classrooms in every state in America today, it does reflect a trend toward diversification that will continue in the nation's public schools. As evidenced by the testimony of the experienced teachers in this study, this reality will require flexibility and modifications in the instructional and classroom practices of teachers as they respond to the needs of their diverse learners. As one teacher so realistically stated, "Each day of

teaching in a highly diverse class is different and unpredictable, and you never know how it will end up."

The findings of this study have identified a number of teaching strategies that have been judged to be effective by experienced FCS middle school teachers in diverse classrooms. These strategies have been identified and/or endorsed by other scholars in the field (Banks & Banks, 1999; Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Saravia-Shore & Garcia, 1995; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003). Although more research is needed to demonstrate and evaluate the effectiveness of specific instructional strategies for diverse learners, the teacher- and classroom-tested strategies identified in this study can serve to inform the practice of all teachers, especially new and inexperienced teachers, in increasingly multicultural classrooms. Finally, and most importantly, the middle school teachers in this study remained positive and enthusiastic in the face of many new challenges they were confronting in their classrooms, indicating a level of success and fulfillment even after many years of teaching. The results of this study provide evidence for optimism about the predicted diversity for American middle school FCS classrooms and offer insights into how teachers in a diverse state are accommodating to the needs of their culturally and linguistically diverse students.

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About The Authors

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Family and consumer sciences educational programs are provided for youth and adults in schools and communities throughout the world. School programs for elementary age children are more likely to be offered in other countries, such as Japan and Malaysia, than in the United States. However, middle schools, high schools, and colleges around the world offer elective and required courses in family and consumer sciences education. Such programs have varying names, such as family and consumer sciences, human development and family science, family studies, work and family life, human ecology, or home Family and Consumer Sciences. Technology and Engineering Education. College Success Program. Student will explore careers while developing their leadership and responsibility skills. Students will practice the appropriate communication skills needed to maintain their personal safety and help them succeed in their lifetime. Student Organizations. The Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO) is an integral part of the career and technical education classroom. CTSOs play an important role in preparing young people to become college and/or career ready. CTSOs develop character, citizenship, technical, leadership, and teamwork skills. ABSTRACT Family and consumer sciences students (n=153) displayed a high level of interest in entrepreneurship courses, were considering entrepreneurial futures, and were planning coursework to prepare for their careers. Interest in more. ABSTRACT Family and consumer sciences students (n=153) displayed a high level of interest in entrepreneurship courses, were considering entrepreneurial futures, and were planning coursework to prepare for their careers. Teaching Strategies for Diverse Learners in FCS Classrooms. Author: Allison, Barbara N; Rehm, Marsha L Source: Journal of Family & Consumer Sciences 99, no. share, jigsaw, and round robin-techniques that can be implemented easily by FCS teachers in their culturally and linguistically more.