

Preservice Agriscience Education Teachers; Their Preparation for Teaching in Diverse 21st Century Classrooms

Author: Aaron Miller

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Project Advisor: M. Susie Whittington

Public school classroom teachers are increasingly encountering diverse populations of students. Consequently, future teachers will be expected to engage in diversity in their classrooms. The questions, then, become, are preservice teachers aware of the diversity they will face, and are preservice teachers adequately prepared to teach in these diverse learning environments? In a 2009 study by Vincent, Kirby, Deeds, and Faulkner, preservice agricultural science teachers showed that the majority of the participants were required to take a multicultural education course as part of their preparation to teach in 21st century classrooms. Is that enough? The purpose of this research was to identify the diversity and inclusion programs/events that have been attended by seniors in preservice agricultural science teacher education at The Ohio State University. The research will play an important role in informing future curriculum for serving diverse classroom populations. A census of nine seniors participated in a focus group in which ten questions (written and oral) were addressed regarding diversity and inclusion programming, and the impact of the program on preparation for teaching diverse populations of students. Results showed that Alpha Zeta Partners (AZP), study abroad, rural sociology class, cultural fairs, their cultural proficiency class, lectures on different cultures, and the Multicultural Center offered programs in which the preservice teachers had participated. Participants learned about diversity/inclusion programs through social media, word of mouth, OSU orientation, AZP and fraternity life. The majority of the preservice teachers indicated that they participated in the programs/events because it was required. However, others cited “getting out of my comfort zone”, being “more 'well-rounded'”, and that they “found the content to be interesting” as reasons for attending. Participants said that it is important to differentiate instruction for underrepresented populations of students in their classrooms. Preservice teachers had positive feelings about diverse classrooms. Conclusions were that preservice teacher curriculum at Ohio State must continue to provide the current content in diversity, such as the cultural proficiency and rural sociology classes, and the immersion in diverse 21st century classrooms. However, the curriculum designers must seek opportunities for implementing programming that reaches the affective aspects of diversity programming.