

Theory into Action: Community Activism Family Workshop

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Summary

This paper details the design of a Community Activism Family Workshop that employs the principles of transformative multiculturalism to empower citizens young and old to promote change. The program has been designed to take place among families at a nonprofit and is built upon the precepts of multicultural education outlined by Nieto and Bode (2008).

Nonprofit Location

The selected nonprofit provides early childhood education, after school and summer programs, and adult day care services to families regardless of their ability to pay. It has operated continuously since 1894. Ninety-five percent of families served by the nonprofit are classified as low-income and 84% are ethnic minorities. The nonprofit works to provide families the support and care necessary to help children and parents succeed. Because of the compassionate staff, the Neighborhood House community is tightly knit and thus serves as an excellent incubator for a community activism workshop.

A Multicultural Learning Experience

The workshop plan is based upon the seven characteristics of multicultural education as outlined by Nieto and Bode (2008). These seven characteristics are:

1. Multicultural education is antiracist education.
2. Multicultural education is basic education.
3. Multicultural education is important for all students.
4. Multicultural education is pervasive.

5. Multicultural education is education for social justice.
6. Multicultural education is a process.
7. Multicultural education is critical pedagogy. (Nieto & Bode, 2008, p.44).

These characteristics will guide the creation of curriculum and implementation of the program.

The Workshop

The Community Activism Family Workshop will be conducted over four weeks. It will consist of four learning circle sessions conducted once a week over a month, one culminating social justice action event, and a demonstration and celebration of the learning and accomplishments. The workshops will be conducted in the nonprofit's gymnasium. Participants are fervently encouraged to bring their entire household—kids and all. The multigenerational participation serves two purposes. First, being able to bring children may eliminate a common situational barrier that parents encounter when participating in learning activities (Patterson & Paulson, 2016). Secondly, as Nieto and Bode (2008) assert, multicultural education is basic education and important for all students. All students include children and youth, and as basic education, it should be imparted from as early as possible.

The four workshop sessions will be conducted from 6-8pm. Dinner will be provided and organizing staff will coordinate to prepare food that accommodates dietary restrictions and embraces cultural culinary traditions. The workshops will be conducted in circles adapted from the instructional methods used at the Jane Addams School for Democracy (Casper, 2003). This will involve creating an adult circle for participants 12 and older, a Kindergarten through Third grade circle, a Fourth through Sixth grade circle, and a preschool circle. The curricular subject material will be adapted to the developmental level of members of the circle.

The learning circles will emphasize that each member of the circle is both a learner and a teacher. Because of the community, it is anticipated that there will be a diversity of languages represented—particularly in the adult circle. After each speaker, we will offer translations into various languages. On the registration form, we will record what languages learners can comfortably speak and translate and rely on participants translating from each other. If we need additional translators, we will reach out to other community organizations to recruit a translator.

Workshop Curriculum

Nieto and Bode (2008) affirm that multicultural education is a process. The curriculum of the workshop series is designed to be a part of a constructivist process and adapt with the needs and interests of the community and participants. Organizers do not want to impose ideas of what *they* think the community need to address. Below are the objectives of each week of the workshop. Adult and youth circles may come up with different issues or work together, depending on interests. The curriculum detailed in the table is tailored for adults, details may change for younger circles, but major objectives will not change. Program organizers will take detailed notes of the discussion to allow for cohesiveness week to week.

Week	Objective	Details
1	Exploring Diversity and Inequality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the workshop is a safe space where all feelings, ideas, and experiences will be respected. Big ideas that are learned from the workshop may be discussed, but the details shared by individuals may not. • Big questions will be asked: What does oppression look like? Have you been oppressed? Have you oppressed other? How do we stop oppression?
2	Choosing an Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on major themes from the week one, the group will choose an issue involving oppression or inequality to tackle. • There should be a consensus on the issue ultimately decided upon. • Participants will be encouraged to further explore the issue before week three with
3	Exploring Issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants will come back with research and ideas about how this issue impacts the community. • They will discuss how action can be taken to raise awareness or combat the issue in the community
4	Planning Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on the discussion of potential action in week three, participants will create a plan of action to address a community issue. • Examples of action could involve a march to the state capitol, a letter writing campaign, a protest, a service-project, a grass-roots media campaign, etc.
5	Social Justice Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In week five, participants will act. This could be as a group or independently depending on the sort of action taken. • Organizers will carefully document the action through photos, notes, video, etc.
6	Demonstration and Celebration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final formal meeting will be a celebration of the learning and accomplishments of the group. • Leaders related to the issue will be invited to the celebration. • Photos, posters, or other appropriate multimedia will be displayed to demonstrate what the workshop accomplished.

References

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