

Diversity and Social Justice in the Massachusetts Classroom:
Teachers Implementation and Students Reflections

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As public school classrooms have become increasingly diverse and complex, the curriculum must reflect this to prepare students for their futures. When shaping the curriculum that our students receive, it is important to ensure a well rounded, multicultural education even if the classroom itself does not reflect a diverse community. This qualitative and quantitative, mixed method research study looked at the Massachusetts state guidelines concerning diversity education and compared it to what teachers say they are implementing in the classroom as well as with what students say they learned. This mixed method design includes teacher surveys (n=78), teacher interviews (n=4), and student surveys (n=289). The student surveys asked college students to reflect upon their public middle and high school education experiences. The findings suggest that students believed that their middle and high school education did not provide an education from diverse perspectives. Many teachers expressed that while they understand what it means to have a diverse classroom, material that incorporates social justice topics and diversity may be seen as controversial, therefore they do not integrate it into their curriculum. The majority of teachers suggested that there is a lack of resources provided by the schools to enhance their comfortability and knowledge around this curriculum integration. In these formative adolescent years, the information that is provided to children is pertinent in shaping their future. This research discovered that there is a mismatch between Massachusetts curriculum guidelines with what is being taught and perceived in the classroom. Recommendations include providing teachers with resource pamphlets, including books, articles and websites, that are readily available for their consultation and sample lesson plans that include themes of diversity and social justice.

Keywords: cultural competence, diversity, social justice, elementary and secondary education, Massachusetts curriculum guidelines, multicultural education, teacher preparation.

Introduction

Public school classrooms are becoming more and more diverse across the United States. According to Anne Moll, “it is unlikely that there is another nation in the world that has more diversity in ethnicity, cultural heritage and ability within its public schools than the United States. People of many faiths, races, cultural heritage and abilities make up our neighborhoods and the classrooms in our public schools” (Moll, 2003 p. 12). Understanding that the compilation of many faiths, races, cultural heritage and abilities interact with one another to reflect

intersectionality, so it is important to realize how students and teachers interact with differing cultural identities. When shaping the curriculum that our students receive, it is important to ensure a well rounded, multicultural education even if the classroom itself does not reflect a diverse community. No matter where they come from, “Students need to understand how multicultural issues shape the social, political, economic and cultural fabric of the United States as well as how such issues fundamentally influence their personal lives” (Gay, 2003, p. 30).

A multicultural education encompasses diverse perspectives and themes of social justice in the classroom. In order to deliver this education, teachers throughout towns and cities must be prepared and educated on how to do so; “classroom teachers and educators must provide students from all ethnic groups with the education they deserve” (Gay, 2003, p. 31). This education is the embodiment of what is preparing our children for their adulthood. According to Gay (2003),

“in its comprehensive form, it [multicultural education] must be an integral part of everything that happens in the education enterprise, whether it is assessing the academic competencies of students or teaching math, reading, writing, science, social studies or computer science. Making explicit connections between multicultural education and subject and skill-based curriculum and instruction is imperative” (Gay, 2003, p. 31).

If we are not teaching students through a lens of diversity and social justice, we are ultimately doing them a disservice.

As a whole, this country is very diverse, but when zoned in on specific areas and school districts, this diversity is not as numerically prominent. According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 59% of all students enrolled in

Massachusetts public schools are White, 20.8% Hispanic, 9.2% African American, 7% Asian, 3.8% reported Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic, 0.2% Native American, 0.1% Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018).

When zoned into specific districts, cities and towns, these percentages are even more disproportionate. For example, within the Brockton Public School District, 59.4% of students are African American, 17.7% White, 15.8% Hispanic, 4.5% Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic, 2% Asian, 0.4% Native American, 0.2% Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander. Within the Bridgewater Raynham School District, 87% of students are White, 5.2% African American, 4.4% Multi-Race, Non Hispanic, 2% Asian, 1.1% Hispanic, 0.1% Native American and 0.1% Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018). Bridgewater-Raynham High School and Brockton High School are only 7.5 miles, a 15 minute drive, away from each other. Therefore, these communities are not isolated from each other. These district demographics do not mirror the state as a whole, but acts as examples of how when moving from town to town, the racial diversity of students changes, but the call for a diversity driven education does not.

In Massachusetts alone, every curriculum from pre-kindergarten all the way until the twelfth grade, is supported by a framework. Within the frameworks for the educational curriculums that Massachusetts has created, there are principles and learning requirements that are clearly stated. They are specific to promoting and implementing multicultural education into the classroom. After identifying and analyzing the educational frameworks that the state of Massachusetts has approved and published, the question remains; are these principles and requirements represented, and if they are, are they presented in the classroom in a way that will

influence the way in which students understand diversity after they graduate?

This study analyzed teacher surveys and interviews to understand if they are teaching in diverse classrooms and if they are teaching diverse content from multiple perspectives. This research allowed a closer lens to understand if teachers have the knowledge and resources to do so and explores what some of the challenges they may face to follow the guidelines of the curriculum frameworks. By including the voices of students, this study also explores if students are receiving and retaining a diversity driven education. Based on teachers' responses, there is a lack of implementation in the classroom that can be attributed to a lack of resources and a fear from teachers. Student's also felt that they did not receive a multicultural education.

Literature Review

Education reform is not a new concept. As time moves on, schools have made some efforts to shape their education curriculums to reflect the needs of the students served. Cherng (2017) specifically investigated education reform and stated that “multicultural education imparts an agenda for teacher education to ensure that all candidates are prepared with the knowledge, skills and dispositions to work effectively with students and communities whose cultural perspectives and lived experiences differ from their own” (Cherng, 2017, p. 219). Cherng analyzed the push for policy reform that gained traction in the late 1960's. The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, as well as the Commission on Multicultural Education, “helped to shift the programmatic attention toward diversity and articulated the role of multicultural training in teacher education” (Cherng, 2017, pg. 219).

In 1973, the Commission on Multicultural Education stated through the No One Model American initiative that “Multicultural education programs are more than special courses or

special learning experiences grafted onto the standard program. The commitment to cultural pluralism must permeate all areas of the educational experience provided for prospective teachers” (Cherng, 2017, p. 220). This initiative acted as a call for action and reform as it was no longer an additional extracurricular for teachers to be trained in multicultural education, but it was now an expectation.

Student Diversity

Education reform also identified and focused on mending the gap between low-income families access to equal education. Creating and understanding an education with the presence of student diversity is important to include perspectives of students in the classroom. A study by Lee (2009) identified three phases of education reform and stated that “Clearly, minority and low-income students are less likely to enroll (or be enrolled) in upper-level courses” (Lee, 2009, p. 141). This pinpoints a discrepancy between the education that different social classes receive, even within the same school. If low income students are less likely to enroll in upper-level courses, there is a separation between social class from classroom to classroom. Diversity within the classroom encompasses various factors and income/social class is one of them.

After researching this observation, Lee “generally agreed that measured achievement was the strongest predictor of curricular placement, but diverged on the extent to which race and social class effects on course-taking remained after adjustments for student achievement” (Lee, 2009, p. 142). This educational discrimination based upon the income of students families places students at a disadvantage in the classroom as well as after graduation for the college track. This study is important because it addresses another cultural identity, socio-economic class, that contributes to the diversity of a classroom. Ideally, there should not be a separation between

individuals from different socio-economic classes within the classroom. Each classroom should receive a diversity driven education that does not discriminate upon students within them. Giving teachers set curriculums with content that encourages education threaded with themes of social justice and diversity promotes the delivery of such information.

Teacher Diversity

While this push for education reform occurred in the late 1900's, it is now even more important to identify and question if teachers are provided with this education on paper; do they have the training and resources to adapt to this knowledge and apply it in the classroom? This gap in ability could be described through the demographic divide between teachers and students. According to the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics and Common Core of Data, "Students from racial and ethnic minority groups now comprise the proportional majority in America's public schools" while "the P-12 teaching force remains predominantly White. 82% of public and 88% of private school teachers identify as non-Hispanic White" (Cherng, 2017, p. 219). With percentages of ethnic diversity growing in the student population, teachers ethnic diversity is scarce. For children, having the ability to form connections and to identify the supports in their lives is pertinent to their growth and development. For children, identifying someone who may be the same race, ethnicity or gender, they have a greater probability of connecting to them. According to the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2019), the demographics in MA reflect a predominantly white, female staff.

Table I

Staffing Demographics by Race, Ethnicity and Gender in Massachusetts Public Schools (2018-2019)

Race	%	<i>n</i>
African American	4	5,393.4
Asian	1.5	2,024.1
Hispanic	4.3	5,706.5
White	89.5	120,189.5
Native American	.09	126.1
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.05	73.3
Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic	.56	745.9
Males	20.2	27,147
Females	79.8	107,107
Total		134,254

According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the staffing data by race, ethnicity and gender, by full-time equivalents in the year of 2018-2019, female professionals totaled to 107,107 while male professionals totaled to 27,147 (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2019). Totaling at 134,254 teachers, these statistics show that approximately 80% of teachers are female. With a clear shortage of male and ethnically diverse teachers, Pabon (2011) focused specifically on investigating the disproportionate amount of black male educators and contemplated ways to increase these statistics within schools. Pabon (2011) identified that

“there are significant challenges in recruiting and training Black male teachers and these problems originate in the K-12 to college pipeline. A disproportionate number of Black males are not graduating from New York City public high schools or matriculating into Brooklyn College. Therefore, the goal is embedded within a paradox. There is a limited pool of Black male teachers currently working in urban schools and a significant shortfall

Black males graduating from the very schools we seek to transform.” (Pabon, 2011, p. 359)

This is only one theorized explanation for the disconnect that separates men, in this case black males, from teaching in the classroom. Historically, men and women were restricted to gendered roles. These stereotypes placed men in what society deemed as more physically and mentally demanding jobs while women either stayed in the home, worked as secretaries or teachers. This outdated gender stereotype could also contribute to the explanation of why women still dominate the field of education.

Students have different experiences to contribute to their learning atmosphere, without an understanding of this diversity the understanding of this from their peers, there is a greater chance for misunderstanding in the classroom. This research will analyze student and teacher experiences to identify areas where both students and teachers are seeking support within the classroom.

Massachusetts Diversity

The curriculum in Massachusetts directly specifies areas where teachers should be incorporating a multicultural education. For example, Guiding Principle 2 of the 2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework states,

“An effective history and social science education incorporates diverse perspectives and acknowledges that perceptions of events are affected by race, ethnicity, culture, religion, education, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and personal experience. The traditional motto of the United States is “*E pluribus unum*” – out of many, one. A

history and social science education that does justice to the remarkable diversity of our country must tell the histories of individuals and groups, and honor a plurality of life stories while acknowledging our ongoing struggle to achieve a more perfect union.

Teaching how the concepts of freedom, equality, the rule of law, and human rights have influenced United States and world history necessarily involves discussions of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other characteristics.

Effective instruction challenges students to value their own heritage while embracing our common ideals and shared experiences as they develop their own rigorous thinking about accounts of events. Effective instruction celebrates the progress the United States has made in embracing diversity, while at the same time encouraging honest and informed academic discussions about prejudice, racism, and bigotry in the past and present.”

(Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018 p.13)

Guiding Principle 2 illuminates the importance of this diversity driven education and outlines the requirements that our teachers are called to embody. Guiding Principle 10 aims to:

“increase students’ understanding of others’ fundamental needs and human and civil rights social awareness), increase students’ capacity to participate in dialogue across differences and to take on the perspectives of others whose experience and position in the world differs from their own” and in addition, encourages “students to collaborate respectfully with diverse peers.” (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, p. 16)

Referencing the English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum framework, Guiding Principle 11 states that,

“Educators should select works of fiction and nonfiction that instill in students a deep appreciation for art, beauty, and truth, while broadening their understanding of the human condition from differing points of view. Reading, discussing, and writing about high-quality prose and poetry should also help students develop empathy for one another and a sense of their shared values and literary heritage, while learning about who they are as individuals and developing the capacity for independent, rigorous thinking.”

(Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, pg. 16)

When students have the ability to learn about their classmates' cultural heritages and backgrounds, in and out of the classroom, they develop the empathetic capability to relate to them in ways that they may not have been able to before. This ability extends to outside of the classroom as they move forward in their lives after elementary and secondary education. The English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum also illustrates how a student should portray in society after receiving the identified education. The Department relays that students who are ready for college, careers, and civic participation should portray the standards set out in this document and have the ability to:

“come to understand other perspectives and cultures. Students appreciate that the twenty-first-century classroom and workplace are settings in which people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives must learn and work together. Students actively seek to understand other perspectives and

cultures through reading and listening, and they are able to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds. They evaluate other points of view critically and constructively. Through reading great classic and contemporary works of literature representative of a variety of periods, cultures, and worldviews, students can vicariously inhabit worlds and have experiences much different than their own.” (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018, pg. 18)

In regard to this expectation, teachers can not directly enforce and require this mindset from their students in the classroom, but the education that they are presenting should identify the importance of it and encourage it. Having the proper resources, support and development is imperative to the ability to portray these principles and guidelines in the classroom. If teachers are not supported by these resources and professional development, there will be a lack of confidence in the classroom. Teachers spend their careers educating youths, but if they do not have the confidence to address and apply these principles, their lack of confidence may defer them from addressing possibly harder topics and lessons in the classroom. Through this mixed method research study, student and teacher surveys, as well as teacher interviews, explored and sought to understand if there is a disconnect between these frameworks and what their classroom experience has looked like.

Methods

To complete this research, IRB approval was sought and granted. Their approval ensures that ethical research practices and protocols were adhered to. This study is a mixed method research design including surveys from Bridgewater State University students who attended public middle and high school, surveys from teachers in Massachusetts and in person interviews

with Massachusetts teachers. The surveys were created through using the Qualtrics software. Once all of the surveys were collected, this researcher began to analyze student and teacher survey responses

Teacher Access

Initially, this study planned to survey/interview teachers from four specific school districts. Superintendents as well as principals from these districts were contacted to access their approval to conduct the study. Initially, two schools were immediately welcoming of the study while one required further documentation and the last did not respond. The district required further documentation about the intended research received through additional essays and paperwork, but eventually denied access since it was the end of the school year. After more consideration, the researcher went back to the IRB and was approved to survey and interview from any teacher in Massachusetts. In the schools that allowed access to teachers and distributed the survey to their staff, a link to the Qualtrics survey was provided via email. Teachers in these districts had the option of taking the survey, but it was not required by their school district. Other teachers received access to this survey via direct contact from the researcher as well as through convenience sampling and snowball sampling.

Teacher Survey and Details

289 survey responses qualified for this research study on the basis that these teachers taught middle or high school in the state of Massachusetts. Of the 289 survey responses, not all teachers fully completed their demographic information. The survey questions can be viewed in Appendix A.

Teacher Sample: Demographic Information (n=289)

Characteristic	<i>n</i>	%
Gender (n=76)		
Male	24	31.6
Female	52	68.4
Ethnicity (n=76)		
White	74	97.4
Asian/Pacific Islander	1	1.3
Other	1	1.3
Age (n=76)		
22-30	18	23.7
31-39	24	31.6
40-48	10	13.2
49-57	17	22.4
58-64	7	9.2

Teacher Interviews

The teacher surveys were sent out toward the end of the school year therefore the interviews were conducted in the summer. At the end of the 18 question survey that these teachers filled out, there was an option to meet for an in person interview. When this option was selected, participants filled out their contact information and an email was sent out to schedule an interview. Out of the 78 completed teacher surveys, 18 teachers replied with “Yes” expressing that they were interested in an in person interview, however only 4 teachers responded to the follow up email to schedule an interview. The interviews lasted between 8-22 minutes. Interview #1 took place at Panera Bread. Interview #2 took place at the public high school. Interview #3 took place in the home of a teacher. Interview #4 took place at a Starbucks. Before

the interview began, a consent form was signed by the participant indicating that they gave permission to proceed with the interview as well as provided consent to be recorded via a tape recorder. This form can be viewed at Appendix D. This interview consisted of 9 concrete questions as well as follow up questions depending on the participants' responses and the questions can be viewed in Appendix B. When all of the data was received, this researcher began to transcribe interviews. Of the 4 interviews, 50% of teachers were female and all 4 teachers were caucasian. The first two interviews were conducted with English Teachers, the third interview was conducted with an ESL teacher who was previously an English teacher and the fourth interview was conducted with a teacher's assistant who works in many classrooms throughout the school.

Student Sample

To recruit students, a flyer was created and approved by the IRB. This form can be viewed in Appendix E. The flyer included a QR code that, when scanned, brought participants directly to the survey link. In addition to the code, it briefly stated the premise of the attached survey. Once students scanned the QR code with their phone, or an installed scanning app, they were brought to the Qualtrics website with the full 14 question survey. The survey questions can be viewed in Appendix C. On Tuesday April 23rd 2019, this researcher Printed 50 copies of the student survey flyer and passed them to students in the Crimson Dining Hall during dinner as well as the Weygand Residence Hall at Bridgewater State University. By the end of this day, 61 survey responses were collected. Flyers continued to be passed out on campus until May 14th 2019. This researcher went to dining halls during busy meal times to recruit students for the completion of this survey. This researcher also interacted with students in dorms to pass out

flyers as well. Only responses of students who attended public middle and high schools in Massachusetts were used for this study due to the qualification guidelines.

Table III

Student Sample: Demographic Information

Characteristic	n	%
Gender (<i>n=289</i>)		
Male	116	40.1
Female	170	58.8
Other	3	1.1
Ethnicity (<i>n=289</i>)		
White	221	76.5
Hispanic or Latino	21	7.3
Black or African American	31	10.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	3	1
Other	13	4.5
Student Year (<i>n=289</i>)		
First Year	54	18.7
Sophomore	55	19
Junior	113	39.1
Senior	61	21.1
Other	6	2
Age (<i>n=289</i>)		
	<i>Range</i> 18-32	<i>Mean (μ)</i> 20.74

Themes

This researcher distinguished common themes from the Teacher Interviews, Teacher Surveys These themes include, but are not limited to, Resources, Lack of Resources, Professional Development, Literature, Confidence, Lack of Confidence, Older Teachers and

Conflict in The Classroom. These themes came from the open ended response questions in the Student Surveys. They were collected by reading and rereading the responses many times to identify common words and concepts. By identifying the similar words and concepts, this researcher was able to sort the student survey content into different themes. Common themes that were derived from the Student Surveys included a lack of diversity driven education from the classroom as well as a lack of confidence after graduating. By placing all of the data in excel forms, this researcher sorted data into categories based on response type. These themes were selected predominantly because they were discussed most in the open response sections.

Results

Teacher Survey Results

In total, 78 survey responses were received, but only 73% of participants fully completed the survey. 27% of participants began the survey and stopped after answering a few questions. These responses were still included due to the data that they were able to provide, any teacher that responded to less than half of the questions were excluded from the survey.

Classroom Diversity

When asked what it means to have a diverse classroom, 78.5% of teachers were able to include multiple social and cultural identities [race, ethnicity, social class, religion, etc.] in their definitions while 21.5% of teachers identified one or none. Since the majority of these teachers are able to identify more than one facet of diversity, this research seeks to further understand if they are teaching to cater to this type of audience. When asked if they would describe the classrooms that they teach in as diverse, 74.24% (n=49) responded with Yes. Most of these

responses included a recorded explanation and specifically defined this diversity through nationality, race, ethnicity, class and other themes of ability.

Would you describe the classrooms that you teach in as diverse? Yes. (*n*=49)

One teacher wrote “I teach students from more than 15 different countries. Additionally, my students are linguistically and culturally diverse.” A teacher referenced the district that they work in and wrote “I have many different types of races in my classroom, ranging from Cape Verdean, Haitian, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and Caucasian. I also have students of different gender identifications.” Another teacher wrote that “while the faculty is diverse in a number of ways in terms of age, generations, gender preferences, ethnicity, religions, et al, our school’s faculty is predominantly white, lacking racial diversity.” This teacher is able to distinguish that their faculty diversity does range in specific variables, but they lack racial diversity. It is important for teachers to recognize a lack in racial diversity, but also to understand the impact that this has on their racially diverse students. Another teacher recorded “though some levels are more diverse than others, the majority of my classes have students that have very different familial situations ranging from homelessness with an older sibling having guardianship to students living in million dollar homes. I have students from the middle east who have drastically different views on womens rights along side transgender students.” This response stood out because this teacher understands how socio-economic class as well as the student’s access to housing and familial life contributes to their student diversity. Again, while it is important to understand these variables that their students represent, it is important that the teachers have the resources to teach these students and create an inclusive learning environment

for students of cultural identities.

Would you describe the classrooms that you teach in as diverse? No. (*n*=17)

The recorded explanations of teachers that would not describe the classrooms that they teach in as diverse included themes of a lack of racial, ethnic and socio-economic diversity. One teacher wrote that their classroom represents “some diversity in mindset but very little in SES and race.” Another teacher documented that their district has a “relatively affluent community with little diversity although the Asian population is increasing.” Teaching in a relatively affluent community, teachers must still have the resources to teach students about communities that do not have this same experience. Another teacher documented that “my classes are composed predominantly of white students overwhelmingly white, upper-middle class, politically liberal and the small minority that doesn't fit that profile is often very reserved.” This teacher recognizes the overwhelmingly homogeneous population that their student body represents but also recognizes the small minority that do not fit within this profile. A teacher wrote that “I think my classroom is diverse in academic abilities but not very diverse in cultural backgrounds and race.”

How can schools cater to students with differing academic abilities, but not to students with different cultural and racial backgrounds? One teacher wrote that “the school has few children from underrepresented populations” and another documented that “while there are some exceptions, the majority of students are from the same demographic and socio-economic background.” To properly prepare students for their lives after middle and high school, based on the standards that Massachusetts provides, teachers must include the integration of curriculum materials that do not just represent the students that are teaching. These teachers recognize and

document that their classrooms are not diverse, but even with a lack of classroom diversity, teachers are still able to represent diversity through their curriculum.

Curriculum Diversity

Teachers were next asked if they provided curriculum materials that represented the diversity of Massachusetts and while 65% answered “Yes,” 35% of participants responded with “No.” While the majority of teachers felt as if they had curriculum materials that represented the diversity of MA, there are still over 1/3 of teachers who admit to the fact that they do not/are unable to. If teachers are not providing a uniformed curriculum to the students, some are educationally placed at a disadvantage from an early age. This disconnect could be explained by a lack of resources and even a lack of confidence in the classroom. The next section asked teachers questions of frequency.

Table IV

Frequency of Teaching About Diversity and Social Justice (n=63)

Frequency Question	Daily	Weekly	A Few Times a Month	Monthly	Never
How frequently are you able to bring topics of diversity into the classroom?	12.7% (n=8)	34.9% (n=22)	22.2% (n=14)	19.1% (n=12)	11.1% (n=7)
How frequently are you able to bring topics of social justice into the classroom?	6.4% (n=4)	25.4% (n=16)	27% (n=17)	20.6% (n=13)	20.6% (n=13)

11% of teachers documented that they Never bring topics of diversity into the classroom and 21% Never bring topics of social justice into the classroom. One hopes that these students do

receive these important variables of their education from the teachers that do bring it into the classroom, but it is better to ensure all teachers do rather than hoping that students receive it elsewhere. The Massachusetts state curriculum does require all teachers to implement it into the classroom.

Preparation to Teach

Table V, Preparation for Teaching About Diversity and Social Justice, shows that on average, 78% of teachers either Strongly Agree or Somewhat Agree that they are prepared to teach the subject of diversity in the classroom, but this leads us to question; If teachers agree that they are prepared to teach around the subject of diversity, why are they not teaching it in the classroom and what can explain the disconnect? In fact, 0% of teachers Strongly Disagreed that they were prepared to teach in a diverse classroom and only 5% of teachers responded that they Somewhat Disagree. 30% and 42% said never or monthly to frequency yet 81% and 76% say strongly or somewhat prepared to teach it. Why are they prepared but not teaching it?

Table V

Preparation for Teaching About Diversity and Social Justice (n=63)

Preparation Question	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I feel well prepared to teach in a diverse classroom.	41.3% (n=26)	39.6% (n=25)	14.3% (n=9)	4.8% (n=3)	0% (n=0)
I feel well prepared to teach the subject of diversity.	27% (n=17)	49.2% (n=31)	14.3% (n=9)	7.9% (n=5)	1.6% (n=1)

Teachers who participated in both the online survey as well as the in person interviews were given Guiding principle 12 that, again, states: “An effective history and social science education incorporates diverse perspectives and acknowledges that perceptions of events are affected by race, ethnicity, culture, religion, education, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and personal experience. Teaching how the concepts of freedom, equality, the rule of law, and human rights have influenced United States and world history necessarily involves discussions of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other characteristics. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018). After having the ability to review this aspect of the curriculum, they were asked how easy or difficult it has been for them to integrate it into their classroom.

Table VI

How easy or difficult has it been for you to integrate this into your classroom? (n=62)

Response	%	n
Very Easy	17.7	11
Easy	19.4	12
Neutral	35.5	22
Difficult	25.8	16
Very Difficult	1.6	1

Out of 78 survey responses only 62 responded to this question. While about 37% of teachers believe that this is very easy or easy to integrate, 27% of teachers find this very difficult or difficult. Therefore, a large number of educators are seeking extra support for curriculum integration. It’s important to note the 36% of teachers who remained neutral. For the large number that remains neutral, what would allow them to have an easier time of integration?

Teacher Interviews

By reading and rereading the transcripts from each in person interview, this researcher was able to correlate common words and concepts to sort into themes. The themes that were predominant throughout the survey responses were Multicultural Education Through Literature, Resource Accessibility, Professional Development, Confidence in The Classroom and Conflict in The Classroom. In the teacher surveys, there were also opportunities to express an open response answer and these responses were sorted into the same themes and also woven into the discussion below.

Multicultural Education Through Literature

3 out of 4 teachers that came forward and agreed to participate in an in person interview were English teachers. One of the three taught English for 10 years before switching to ESL. As 75% of participants have a great deal of experience surrounding literature, this topic came up quite a few times during their interviews. Fortunately, when asked for examples of a lesson plan these teachers taught that included diverse perspectives, each teacher was able to identify one through their use of literature. One teacher acknowledged the requirement for “anchor texts” and included their way of using them to identify diverse perspectives

“So I think one of the things that we're looking at doing more of, um, is the, we have our anchor texts, you know, like Othello. Um, and so we're really thinking about the anchor texts that we choose. And moving away from the, I call it the "dead white men curriculum" because that's what it always has been. It's been things like, you know, Beowulf and Chaucer, not that those aren't important, but I think for like the standard college class that every senior has to take. So not the AP or, um, we're, we're thinking

about really swapping out some of the older texts or if we do have to teach, So say the, the, um, common core requires us to teach that, uh, Shakespeare every year but junior year. Okay. So we've got to have a play in there somewhere. That's why we chose Othello. It used to be Hamlet. So that's one of the things we're doing.” (Interview #2, June 27, 2019, Personal Interview).

Referring to the “anchor texts” as the “dead white men curriculum” acknowledges the preconceived bias that these texts reveal and encourage. By swapping out the older texts with other texts from the same era that promote the perspectives that this teacher is identifying, they are able to use literature to begin to provide this education. This teacher also understands the idea of choosing texts to represent various identities including gender, race, class, disability, etc. They mentioned “we're also looking at a lot of nonfiction, a lot of essays that incorporate those different perspectives about gender, about race, class, disability, um, and trying to supplement the anchor texts that we use with those multiple perspectives” (Interview #2, June 27, 2019, Personal Interview). During another interview, one teacher identified the importance of diversity through literature. This teacher was able to identify a text that properly addressed the poverty gap.

“So one thing, um, that's interesting, when I taught seventh grade, I'd always teach A Christmas Carol and, it was in the curriculum and something that was sort of interesting was that, um, kids had a lot of different ideas about a family, like the Cratchit family and whether or not someone like Scrooge would be obligated or should, um, help him. So that was kind of interesting. Um, so I can't really remember. Um, the kids would come in with

a lot of sort of like preconceived ideas, um, that probably, I think a lot of it was coming from, you know, their homes and different like political beliefs. Especially right now, I feel like in the last four or five years or so, everything's been very sort of politically charged.” (Interview #3, July 16, 2019, Personal Interview).

A Christmas Carol is a classic piece of literature and, historically, there are so many ways that it can be taught. Highlighting themes of socio-economic imbalance and disability in the classroom allows students to think about and explore this form of diversity. Having these discussions and making students aware of the economic gaps from the literature allows them to critically think and apply this same understanding to the world around them. In the first interview, the teacher identified two books used in their classroom that focused on racial diversity. The first book was *Ghost Boys* by Jewell Parker Rhodes and the second, *The Crossover* by Kwame Alexander. Referencing *The Crossover*, this teacher recalled that,

“It's in verse form, written by the author himself, first was like a hip-hop book. So it's another quote that a lot of kids they seem to take to when I tell them this book of poetry, they're like, yeah, I'm all set and I don't want to read it. And then by the end, their like, it's really good. They enjoy it. Um, it also had to deal with issues of race. Um, and there's one particular section of the book where, you know, his family gets pulled over by a cop and they're all concerned about what's gonna happen next. So some of the kids could relate to that more than others. So I think the tough thing is trying to find all the kids, not necessarily to relate to the work. but to at least understand the different perspective that comes with it” (Interview #1, June 26, 2019, Personal Interview).

This lesson encompasses many benefits for students. Using rap and rhyme to teach kids about both poetry, racial oppression and discrimination gives them an opportunity to be more involved with the lesson. This teacher identifies that some of the students in their class could personally relate to the injustices experienced in the literature. They do provide important insight by saying that the tough part is not necessarily trying to get every child to relate to the work, but to understand the different perspective that comes with it. While these self-motivated teachers have the ability to identify literature to provide a diversity driven education, it is then important to ask and understand whether or not they have the resources to support it.

Resource Scarcity

When asked whether or not the teachers thought that they needed more resources in or out of the classroom, all four teachers identified that there is a lack of resources from their schools. Resource scarcity is not a new challenge. As times continue to change and more information is discovered, teachers are expected to keep their students up to date. More often than not, they must achieve this without the proper resources. Teachers were asked what kinds of resources they have available to them. In the first interview, the teacher began to laugh;

“If that laugh wasn't telling enough... Not a lot. Um, so with like the books that I've, that we've used, I've had to use a donor's choose to get the books into the classrooms. I have a curriculum coordinator who's willing to like get us a trial set of books or stories if need be. But it's not enough to get an entire class. So what I've had to resort to is, you know, I'm spending my own money or spending money of others, which is, you know, very unfortunate. You know, we talked about how we're, you know, a diverse school system and that we're willing to teach these topics, but when push comes to shove, they don't

have the money to do it” (Interview #1, June 26, 2019, Personal Interview).

According to the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, on average, teachers in Massachusetts make \$62,000 a year. In comparison to the poverty line in the United States, this would be considered a livable wage, but teachers with families and every day expenses often struggle financially. For a teacher to be using their personal income, as well as the collection of other people’s money, as a resource budget is, in fact, “very unfortunate.” The schools may not have the money to provide these resources, but it truly takes a dedicated teacher with the financial stability and passion to facilitate this. During Interview #2, when asked about resources a teacher revealed that,

“Um, I do tap into a lot of resources online. I tap into the, um, government website... now I can't remember. Um, I know pbs.org has a ton. Um, when I was teaching, um, *In The Heat Of The Night* and I had to teach it, I actually taught a lesson on *Freedom Summer* in their class. Um, I, I actually tapped into the government archives cause I needed archival, um, information about like the volunteers and what their qualifications were and all of that. Um, I do a lot of online digging when it comes to stuff like that. Um, sometimes I'll tap into the LBGTQ advisors here, you know, other teachers, um, who deal with these issues more directly and say, "Hey, you know, what do you use in your curriculum" or "what do you use with your group?" Um, there is an awful lot of sharing that goes on in this school, which is great. Um, but that's pretty much the kind of just take everything that I can get when I'm doing it” (Interview #2, June 27, 2019, Personal Interview).

The frequent pauses throughout this interview signified that the teacher was unsure how

to answer. This response suggests that no resources are provided from their school/ district.

Based on their response, this teacher is seeking resources for themselves. Without this sense of motivation, a teacher would not have the proper resources to attempt to teach a diversity driven class. This interviewee goes on to acknowledge the hours they spend searching for these materials;

“It would be nice to have curriculum materials cause I do feel like I spend a ton of time researching, reading, discarding, pulling things together. You know, like the units I'm doing on Othello, uh, for every act of Othello I'm trying to find a different topic to talk about. So like one of the, one of the topics is going to be domestic violence and abusive relationships. So it would be nice if I had a prepackaged something, but I don't, so what I do is I go online, you know, I do some research. I find out, you know, what the markers are with the, you know, red flags are, you know, give a couple of essays, you know, find a couple of essays that I can give to the kids to kind of see if they can read it and think about it in the context of the play. And so that takes me hours to do. So to have some of that stuff. Um, it would be, it'd be nice to have some kind of, something I could work with, I guess” (Interview #2, June 27, 2019, Personal Interview).

It is not enough for a teacher to just have their students read a text, it is what the reader gains from the literature that allows them to learn. This teacher seeking to outline and develop lesson plans based on the topics that students should be learning from the literature demonstrates the actions of a great educator. The hours they spend searching for the proper materials, due to a lack of resources, is only derived from a sense of self-motivation and passion. Unfortunately, this

same work ethic can not be generalized for all teachers. If the resources are not readily available, teachers may not seek them personally. Resources for teachers do not have to just take the form of printed text, they can also be received through professionally developed knowledge. During Interview #3, the teacher mentioned that,

“I think a lot of teachers would like to jump in and talk about stuff like this, but you really need a lot of like scripted a lot of, um, materials at your disposal. So you're sort of prepared if the conversation goes one way or the other. So I've liked those a lot because they even kind of tie things into current events and things that, you know, students are hearing about huge things right now. Um, one for example is, is immigration, you know, with everything going on at the border and people have different, you know, different ideas about it. And, um, especially the population. I work with a lot of the kids, working and teaching ESL, a lot of the kids, you know, are really deeply affected by this, so I need some resources for that.” (Interview #3, July 16, 2019. Personal Interview)

This teacher suggests that a lack of resources and materials may lead to a lack of confidence when teaching in the classroom. Having the preparation to address all outcomes that a conversation may lead to gives teachers the ability to feel comfortable addressing particularly harder topics with their students.

Confidence in the Classroom

During the interviews, the participants were asked what they felt could enhance their confidence around teaching diversity and in diverse classrooms? Their responses exhibited the internal struggle they face when attempting to address these topics in the classroom. One teacher

expressed,

“I think more professional development, more training, more money to buy different books instead of the same books that we've always used. Gosh, that's a good question. Let me read it one more time just to see what I got. You can see how unconfident I am right now with that question. Um, yeah, I think just more professional development training, having guest speakers come in. Not just for like the students but for like the teachers as well because I think a lot of us, we want to do our best and want to help people out, but we're unsure of how to do it in a way that is appropriate to what is most beneficial for the kids. And so rather than trying something or challenging ourselves, we choose to, you know, resort to the same curriculum and the books that we've been using forever. Like I've tried in the last few years now to bring it more um, social justice related books or books that have diverse perspectives and you know, as a white guy, like it's not, like whatever message I may be getting across, they might not be taking just because of who I am. White guys have it easiest, everything we have is pretty easy. To try and tell these kids how to understand or empathize with a different perspective, coming from me, It's not as effective as it could be coming from somebody else. So just just have someone else there bring that perspective home would be ideal” (Interview #1, June 26, 2019, Personal Interview).

This teacher, seeking more professional development, training and money to purchase resources directly admits and acknowledges his lack of confidence. They also check their own privilege by acknowledging how their demographics may present to students in the classroom

and affect their credibility regarding the subject matter. Another teacher also recognizes this bias when responding to this question by saying, they seek “ways to connect to the kids more on their level. I mean for me, in my class, I'm in an urban classroom and I'm a caucasian male so if I could connect to them more on like a different level with them, I think I would be able to just get my, my point more across if that makes sense” (Interview #4, July 18, 2019, Personal Interview). Resources, tools and skill-sets for these teachers could allow them to build this confidence in the classroom. Another teacher opened up and admitted to their fear of saying the wrong thing in the classroom.

“I think it's really hard because sometimes people, I think kids don't, depending on the age you're working with, kids don't have the vocabulary to talk about it. Um, some kids might be like excited to talk about it and other kids it's, and I think as a teacher too, you're so afraid, sometimes you're afraid to have these conversations because it's hard things. I mean I'm stumbling for words right now cause I don't want to say the wrong thing. It's all, all these things are so sensitive. I think especially probably more so than ever. People can get offended really, really easily. And I think that can sometimes sort of hamper, um, kind of hamper learning. Um, it's I think a lot of teachers are afraid to even bring a lot of these current events and things into their, um, into their classrooms...And I think a lot of teachers are afraid for a lot of good, for a lot of good reasons” (Interview #3, July 16, 2019. Personal Interview).

This teacher had the ability to recognize their fear of saying the wrong thing in the classroom to their students as well as to this researcher during the interview. There is a fear of

being offensive. Off the record and not recorded, this teacher admitted that this fear that teachers experience could be driven by the district policies. They admitted that teachers are afraid of talking about the wrong things in the classroom to their students in fear of being fired. In the teacher survey, teachers had the ability to fill in the benefits and challenges they experience to teaching this diversity and social justice driven curriculum. One teacher expressed that they

“teach in a district where we are discouraged from having personal conversations with our students. Discussing many different perspectives often bring up personal stories, which then puts the teacher in a difficult position of potentially breaking district policy. As such, I tend to talk about these topics from a historical perspective that directly relate to the curriculum.”

Being discouraged from having personal conversations with students does set boundaries in the classroom, but it also prevents teachers from addressing some of these harder topics for a fear of breaking policies and risking their job. Another response from the teacher survey expressed that,

“unfortunately for students and teachers alike, this material is seen as very controversial. In today’s political climate not too many people's jobs are safe if they are to slightly misspeak or upset the wrong person.”

Having the ability, resources and tools to address harder topics in the classroom as well as professional development supported by the schools could increase this confidence in the classroom.

Conflict in the Classroom

The fear of failure in the classroom can lead to a lack of confidence for teachers and so can conflict. Teachers work hard to maintain a peaceful atmosphere and learning environment for their students and may avoid certain lessons for the fear of this conflict. As mentioned before, some teachers are discouraged from having personal conversations with students and the repercussions of breaking this carries the conflict out of the classroom in the form of a fear of job loss. One teacher disclosed through the survey that “The challenge is that we live in a divisive political world and while it is not the discussions with students in my classroom that give me pause, it is the potential backlash from members of the community who do not like the increasing socio-economic diversity of the last two decades.” Therefore, a teacher may feel comfortable having difficult conversations with their students, but due to backlash from the community, teachers are afraid to lose their jobs. During Interview #3, the teacher who had previously talked about teaching *A Christmas Carol* expressed that there was a backlash from parents to the point where they removed the book from the curriculum. They stated,

“Well, I know for example, the bulk of *A Christmas Carol* was in the seventh grade curriculum, um, and we were going to see it at, we were going to see the show and, and a lot of parents, not a lot, but a couple of parents, you know, sort of expressed concern because they felt that it was, it was religious and why were we going to see something religious? So I, yeah, I, I do think sometimes, um, sometimes that's a sort of a piece of it as well” (Interview #3, July 16, 2019, Personal Interview).

For a teacher who has followed the same curriculum for years to then encounter sudden

backlash from parents, it causes both uncertainty in a teacher's level of confidence as well as conflict in the classroom and a fear of job loss. This teacher also identified moments in the classroom where students brought in preconceived biases into the discussion. These moments require a great deal of skill and experience to manage well. They revealed,

“Most of the kids in the system, and even some of the kids I work with have sort of a background in, um, the Holocaust, but I had students who had one, never heard of the Holocaust. Um, I had some students from Haiti that like knew nothing about it, um, coming in. Now. The other thing that was even more interesting probably, um, I have students from Pakistan who are wonderful, wonderful kids but had no, never really, um, they had such a sort of like turbulent past between their religious group. Um, and, and the Jews and they had not studied it that much... I had kids that were, I could think of one girl, she's a wonderful, wonderful, like the most caring girl, but she just had all these sort of preconceived ideas and even personal experiences, um, where, which would have led her to be perhaps, um, the stereotype a little bit about that, about, about the people from the Jewish religion. So it was really interesting I think to sort of show how I think each group, um, has been, or maybe not each group, but many different religious groups have been, um, ostracized and had experienced like horrible conflicts in some way. ”

(Interview #3, July 16, 2019, Personal Interview).

Students who have remained in the same school system from the beginning of their education to the end receive the same, if not extremely similar, education. Students who have moved to various towns, states and even countries may not receive an identical education. More

often than not, teachers assume that students have had the same education before they come into their classroom. Historically, the Holocaust is a standard part of the curriculum. For students who are entering the school systems from differing educational backgrounds, they do not have the same preparation as their peers. This educational difference may fuel conflict in the classroom as well as reveals biased of students who have received this information from a different perspective. For a teacher, mediating the opinions of their students may be overwhelming and also feed into this conflict.

Professional Development

Once teachers are licensed to educate, they must be relicensed every 5 years. This renewal requires teachers to pay a fee and obtain 150 PDP's. PDP's are Professional Development Points. According to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and The Office of Educator Licensure,

Professional development activities shall be identified by the educator and supervisor during the development of, and review of, the Individual Professional Development Plan (IPDP)* in order to better support student achievement. Individual professional development plans must include at least 150 PDPs that break down as follows:

1. At least 15 PDPs in content (subject matter knowledge)
2. At least 15 PDPs in pedagogy (professional skills and knowledge)
3. At least 15 PDPs related to Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) or English as a Second Language (ESL)
4. At least 15 PDPs related to training in strategies for effective schooling for students with disabilities and the instruction of students with diverse learning styles

The remaining required 90 PDPs may be earned through either "elective" activities that address other educational issues and topics that improve student learning, or additional content, and/or pedagogy (The Office of Educator Licensure, 2017, pg. 5).

As outlined above, these PDPs require teachers to receive professional development in four different areas. In area #4, it gives the option between “effective schooling for students with disabilities” and the “instruction of students with diverse learning styles.” While the phrase *diverse learning styles* can encompass a variety of things, it does not specifically require or engage teachers in professional development around a diversity and social justice driven, multicultural education. Requiring specific PDPs in this area could be a way to promote professional development around how to implement diversity driven curriculums.

During the teacher interviews, all 4 participants expressed concern in this area. This researcher asked in the interviews if the participants have received any professional development training around teaching diversity and social justice. During Interview #1, the teacher responded by saying,

“No. None. We've had trauma based teaching and responsive classroom, which I think partially overlapped into it, but not enough. And it's definitely a big concern I have with my school system right now is that we're becoming more and more diverse and we don't have the perspectives that actually adequately teach it” (Interview #1, June 26, 2019, Personal Interview).

While trauma based teaching and responsive classroom development is important, it still does not provide the same education and preparation that this research is calling for. This teacher

has the ability to recognize the increase in diversity across the student body he serves and to also understand the lack of perspectives to teach it may result in frustration in the classroom. When the same question was asked in another interview, the participant responded by saying,

“I probably need more training, you know, um, I think, I think I have, I think I'm a good teacher. I think I have a lot of enthusiasm for my subject. I think that that projects to my class, I think my kids are engaged and motivated. Um, but I also think that it would help if I had a greater understanding of everything that that term encompasses. Diversity.

Because immediately what you're thinking about is race and that's not all of what it is.

Right? So for me it would help to have some training, you know, how, how do we define that word in the 21st century? How does a classroom teacher address all of those different needs and understand all of those different perspectives while still trying to teach curriculum. Um, which is a challenge, but I'm up for it, you know, as long as I have the training” (Interview #2, June 27, 2019, Personal Interview).

In the form of professional development, the training that this teacher seeks is surrounding the modern day definition and explanation of diversity as well as how to properly address it in the classroom. These teachers are willing to incorporate and promote a multicultural education, but all four teachers reported that they lack the proper resources to promote and encourage their confidence around these topics in the classroom. The teachers identified and interviewed in this study are motivated to achieve the results they want to see in the classroom. Not all teachers may be willing to put in this extra work, time and money outside of the classroom to obtain resources and materials in order to ensure this curriculum. Aside from

resources and the time to prepare, some teachers may not have the confidence to address these topics of diversity and social justice in the classroom. While it is important to understand teachers' first hand experiences in the classroom, it is important to hear students' voices to understand their experiences.

Student Results

342 responses were received from students and 289 qualified for the study. This qualification was based on the fact that these students attended public middle and high school in Massachusetts. When the students were asked to define diversity, key words from the collected responses included *variety, variation, mixture, mix, different, multiple, inclusive, inclusion, differences, color, and race*. 66% of responses identified diversity as people being different or having a difference, 29% wrote in their definition that there is a focus on race or racial difference although 26% of participants were able to identify more than one social identity that contributes to diversity in their definition.. Students were asked if their high school was diverse and to explain their rationale. It is important for students to know that the term “diversity” encompasses race, but also includes gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, disability, cultural values, education, socio-economic status, and other factors, but this researcher is unable to identify whether or not the students answered these questions with this definition in mind

Was your high school diverse? Yes.

Based on these definitions, 49% of participants reported that their high school was diverse while 51% of participants reported that it was not diverse. Of the 49% (n=144) of students that reported to attend a diverse high school they described this diversity in many ways. One student wrote that the population at their school had “many different backgrounds, whether

it's race, social status, or economic status; opportunities present to succeed no matter your background.” This student understands the various aspects that contribute to diversity. Another student documented that their school was “LGBTQ accepting, ethnically accepting, yet it was not completely diverse in that there were mostly white straight students even though we always would talk about being diverse the statistics did not display extreme diversity.” This participant did not attend a diverse school, but they were able to learn about acceptance and have discussions about diversity.

Was your high school diverse? No.

51% (n=145) of student participants reported that their high school was not diverse. When asked to explain why they answered this way, one student reported “It was very white and very middle class upper class people. There was little diversity in religious views, the only diversity we had would be some LGBT students, but even then it wasn't very diverse.” This student is able to identify a lack of diversity in multiple variables including racial, socio-economic, religious and sexual orientation. Another student wrote that “culturally the school is very white, and although there are opportunities for people to learn about different cultures students either are too nervous or scared to partake in them.” The fear that this student mentions about opportunities for students to learn about different cultures may be part of a stigma that they have been exposed to. If the school is “very white,” as the student described, this fear may be misrepresented as a lack of understanding. Often, people fear what they are unable to understand and if students have never been exposed to different cultures, they may become nervous to partake in these opportunities. Another student reported that “Most students were white and those that were of a different diversity gained little recognition in the goals of the

institution.” If minorities do not receive recognition in the goals of an institution, there is an underlying stigma presented to the student body and community. One student wrote that in their high school experience, their school had “less than 1% people of color, no known people with disabilities, mostly middle class” and another student reported that “most of the school was wealthy and white, with little to no exposure to any other kind of life.” These students are able to recognize and describe the lack of diversity in their high school experiences.

Student Diversity

With 49% of students coming from a self reported diverse high school, it is important to recognize that these participants had the ability to identify what defined this diversity or lack of diversity. Allowing the participants to fill in their rationale painted a picture of what their average classroom experience looked like. Students referencing a lack of racial diversity outlined a homogenous high school experience while students who felt that their high school was diverse included the positive environment that they were influenced by. While it is important for students to recognize if their school was diverse, there is an even greater importance surrounding their ability to identify whether or not their curriculum was diverse. In the student survey, participants were asked if their middle school offered a diverse education; 43% responded “Yes” while 57% responded “No”. When participants were asked if their high school offered a diverse education, 55% responded “Yes” while 45% responded “No”. The younger that children see, hear and observe the different things that surround them, the greater the probability is that they will remember it and incorporate it into their lives as they get older. If students are not exposed to a diverse education at a younger age, the chances that they will be able to absorb and apply the principles of its importance into their future is not as likely.

Classroom Experiences

Students were then asked a series of questions to which their possible responses could be “Strongly Agree,” “Somewhat Agree,” “Neither Agree Nor Disagree,” “Somewhat Disagree,” and “Disagree.”

Table VII
Student Classroom Experiences

Question and Response	%	<i>n</i>
<i>Your classroom materials included multiple perspectives on history.</i>		
Strongly Agree	14.6	42
Somewhat Agree	39	113
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	14.9	43
Somewhat Disagree	24.6	71
Strongly Disagree	6.9	20
<i>Your Classroom Materials Included Multiple Perspectives on Past and Present Social Issues</i>		
Strongly Agree	18.3	53
Somewhat Agree	42.9	124
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	14.5	42
Somewhat Disagree	19.4	56
Strongly Disagree	4.8	14
Identified Guiding Principle 2 for Participants: <i>My school integrated this into my curriculum.</i>		
Strongly Agree	18	52
Somewhat Agree	41.5	120
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	19.7	57
Somewhat Disagree	13.5	39
Strongly Disagree	7.3	21
<i>It is important for schools to teach diversity even if their classroom is not diverse.</i>		
Strongly Agree	83.4	241

Somewhat Agree	11.4	33
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	3.8	11
Somewhat Disagree	0.7	2
Strongly Disagree	0.7	2

94.8% of students strongly or somewhat agree that it is important for schools to teach diversity even if their classroom is not diverse. This overwhelming percentage of students recognize the importance of receiving a diverse curriculum. For the first three questions, over half of participants did agree that their classroom included multiple perspectives of diversity and social justice curriculum, but just under half did not. This imbalance is important to note because according to the Massachusetts curriculum guidelines, all students should receive these perspectives in their curriculum. The ability for students to recognize the importance of this diverse education, while also expressing that they did not receive it in their past experiences, highlights the critical issue in education. It seems that both students and teachers agree that not everyone is receiving the curriculum that the Massachusetts guidelines state they should, and if they are, it is not always frequently. At the end of the survey, participants were asked if the student believed that they were prepared to enter and work in a diverse society after graduation. This fill in question allowed students to enter their thoughts without the restriction of a multiple choice question.

Student Post-Graduation Reflection

At the end of the survey, students were asked the question” After graduating high school, do you feel like you were provided with the right resources to enter and work in a diverse

society? Please explain.” Participant responses (n=269) were sorted into themes. These themes include “Yes, but not from school/curriculum,” (n=64) “No” without an explanation (n=15), “No” with an explanation (n=82), “Yes” without an explanation (n=40) and “Yes” with an explanation (n=49). The majority of these responses, 30.5% of students, reported that they did not feel they were provided with the right resources to enter and work in a diverse society and they explained why.

Yes, but not from the school/curriculum.

23.8% (n=64) of students reported that they did feel as if they were prepared to enter and work in a diverse society after graduating high school, but they did not receive this preparation from their school/curriculum. One student wrote “I feel like I learned these skills outside of the classroom and my high school did not teach me much about diversity.” Sources that they identified these resources from included their family, job, online sources, friends, their experience in the military and many others. Examples of student responses include, “From my family, yes.” “no, I learned at my job,” “not in my high school, at least. I learned a lot about diversity through online sources, not through my high school. A lot of history teachers didn’t offer the kind of education we should have gotten,” and “yes but it was provided to me through ways outside the school. (Family, work, mentoring, friends, etc)” These responses state that these students did not receive a curriculum that prepared them to live and work in a diverse society, but rather, they were able to identify specific outside resources that provided this for them.

Many students referenced their upbringing. One student said, “I was provided by my upbringing, not school” and another reported “I was raised in a way that allowed me to do this,

but I don't believe my high school education truly facilitated this.” Through individual curiosity, students were also able to receive this preparation. One student wrote, “I feel as though I was, but only based on my curiosity and not my education. If I had not been interested in diversity, coming to college would have been a culture shock.” and another documented “No. I learned a lot about diversity/ different cultures through my own individual experiences outside of being a student. I had to educate myself in understanding the contexts of different cultures” It was through this individual curiosity and discovery that these students were able to feel prepared after graduation. Another student spoke of their Military involvement and noted that in high school they had “not much experience with other cultures. Military gave me that experience.”

No.

36% (n=97) of students reported that no, they did not feel that they were provided with the right resources to enter and work in a diverse society. 30.5% (n=82) of these students were able to articulate an explanation. One student wrote “I feel teachers could do a better job at helping students understand their own biases.” Part of providing a diverse curriculum is helping students to understand their own biases as well as how to manage these in a diverse society. A student wrote,

“I do not think that the classes I took in middle and high school prepared me to enter a diverse society after graduation. We only learned about history in a light that made America look good and there was never any conversation about social justice issues in the classroom. Even for a black male, coming to college was a culture shock that I was not ready for.”

This student identified a biased education that was received from their curriculum and discussed the culture shock that they experienced coming to college. Another student referenced this by stating, “No, coming to college was a culture shock because high school felt like a bubble of all the same people from the same race and we did not have an education that prepared us for a diverse society.” College was able to introduce these students to different opportunities and experiences to further understand diversity, but if they had not come to college after high school, they would not have been prepared to live and work in a diverse society.

One student wrote that “I felt like some teachers didn’t know how to discuss certain topics comfortably” while another student reported “No due to the lack of cultural tools my high school did not provide this.” To the same token, another student wrote “No, because there was a lack of diversity in the school, therefore some of the teachers weren’t equipped with the resources to teach me to work in a diverse society” and “No, most of the teachers were barely provided with the resources themselves.” As reported in the teacher surveys and interviews, if teachers do not feel comfortable addressing topics, or do not have the resources and tools to do so, they often omit it from their curriculum. Students wrote statements such as “No, I wasn’t taught how to handle diversity either” and “No resources provided for society. More of a "don't acknowledge that people are different or you're prejudiced" type mentality.” A mentality that teaches children not to acknowledge that people are different does not make them prejudiced if they do so. Culturally competent classrooms and curriculum materials celebrate the differences of others.

One student wrote “No, not really. They didn’t really explain that society was diverse and we were left to figure it out ourselves. Don’t know how to live in a world with diversity.” This

response implies that this individual still does not know how to live in a world with diversity. After graduating high school and entering a diverse society, it is a disservice from schools to their students who have left without this ability. Another student wrote “No. I wasn’t aware of social issues until my 20s.” Not only are social issues present historically throughout various contexts, but to enter a diverse society without the awareness of social issues creates a disconnect to the peers and colleagues that are directly affected by them.

36.1% of all participants admit that they were not prepared to live and work in a diverse society after graduating high school. Rather than addressing it in the classroom, students expressed that their curriculum did not step out of “social boundaries” and that their schools “avoided discussing such topics.” 33.1% of participants responded saying that their middle and secondary school experience did prepare them to live and work in a diverse society after graduating, but when asked to explain how and why, their answers were vague and conditional. Students did not go into detail about this preparation and many only said they were prepared under certain scenarios. 23.8% of participants reported that they were prepared but specifically identified reasons for their preparation that were not attributed or credited to their school experience/curriculum.

Discussion

The Massachusetts curriculum standards are clear – students should be receiving diversity education and this is the explicit curriculum. Some may get it in the implicit curriculum, (being in a diverse school) but that is not enough or guaranteed. These findings suggest that teachers do not have the resources, and are overall not prepared, to teach a

multicultural curriculum with content and themes of diversity and social justice. In return, students are not receiving an education that is reflective of the world that surrounds them to prepare them for their lives after graduation. The importance of a diversity driven and social justice based education is evident through years of research. The implications of an education that does not embody this multicultural curriculum ultimately places students at a disadvantage. This curriculum gives students a well rounded perspective; allowing our youth to be more empathetic, better problem solvers, adaptable to various situations, etc., the benefits are endless. Unfortunately, although Massachusetts has integrated this curriculum into their guidelines, the curriculum that the state has presented on paper does not transfer into the classroom.

Moll (2003) highlighted the diversity that this nation represents and discussed the necessity for the inclusion into curriculums. Gay (2003) illuminates and understands the importance of multicultural education for all students and also emphasizes that “classroom teachers and educators must provide students from all ethnic groups with the education they deserve” (Gay, 2003, p. 31). This research has discovered that not all teachers are provided with the resources, ability and opportunity to teach their students with a diverse curriculum. In fact, on average, 53% of students who took this survey reported that their middle and high school experiences were diverse.

The teachers in this study are not isolated examples of professionals lacking in resources and ability to address these curriculum requirements. A study completed in 2009 “analyzed 45 syllabi from multicultural education classes, focusing on the ways in which multicultural education is conceptualized in course descriptions, course goals, course objectives, and other

conceptual and descriptive text” (Gorski, 2009, 311). These syllabi were all from courses taught in higher education to train and teach future educators. This study discovered that “most of the syllabi did not appear to be designed to prepare teachers to practice authentic multicultural education” and “the analysis revealed that most of the courses were designed to prepare teachers with pragmatic skills and personal awareness, but not to prepare them in accordance with the key principles of multicultural education, such as critical consciousness and a commitment to educational equity” (Gorski, 2009, 309). This analysis shows that teachers' multicultural education is geared more toward being able to recognize personal biases but not how to check these at the door of their classrooms to address topics of difficulty in the classroom. Throughout every district and school, both teachers and students are at a disadvantage. If teachers are not benefitting from the proper education prior to teaching, training and workshops, they will not have the confidence to support themselves in the classroom. This initiative truly starts with the education that teachers receive so that they have the ability to properly teach and prepare their students.

Conclusion

This research represents a divide between the necessary curriculum material for students as well as teachers, versus what they are actually receiving. Whether youths are graduating high school to move onto higher education, the workforce, the military, etc., they must be prepared to enter this society with an understanding of what it means to live and function in a diverse community and world. When students are sheltered in the classroom and only receive an education tainted by biases and omissions of important information, they are placed at a

disadvantage moving forward. More often than not, “professional development for school leaders is, too often, an alter-thought or something marginal involving occasional conferences, workshop attendance or sporadic exposure to thought-provoking speakers. While these activities may have some merit in developing higher-skilled school administrators, continuous professional development with a sustained plan for professional growth is much more likely to markedly increase knowledge and skills” (Donlevey, 2006). To have an understanding of multicultural education, including topics of social justice and diversity, fosters the ability to be a more accepting and understanding person. Having the ability to not only understand, but to embrace the differences that we carry is a celebration of humanity. If we are able to instill these beliefs and perspectives in children at a young age, they will have a lifetime of growth and application. Thus far, this study has focused on middle and high school education, but if preschools, kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools begin to enrich their students with a diversity driven and social justice based education, we will be able to produce educated individuals who are ready to enter their lives after high school graduation with cultural competence and understanding. By creating resources, exposing schools to faculty workshops and compiling sample lesson plans for teachers, the data from this study will begin to launch an understanding of educational necessity. This research draws attention to the overall need for education reform for both teachers and students.

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Appendix A
Survey for Teachers

Investigation of Massachusetts Diversity Curriculum

1. How old are you?
 - 22-30 years old
 - 31-39 years old
 - 40-48 years old
 - 49-57 years old
 - 58-64 years old
 - 65 or older
2. What grade(s) do you teach? (fill in, in case of multiple)
3. What subject(s) do you teach? (fill in, in case of multiple)
4. How long have you been teaching? (fill in)
5. Did you go to Public School in Massachusetts? (yes or no)
 - If not where? (extra comment box)
6. What gender do you identify with?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other
7. What is your Ethnicity?
 - White
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Black or African American
 - Native American or American Indian
 - Asian/ Pacific Islander
 - Other (fill in)
8. Highest degree or level of education
 - Bachelor's degree (e.g. BA, BS)
 - Master's degree (e.g. MA, MS, MEd)
 - Other _____
9. What district do you work in?
 - Bridgewater-Raynham
 - Brockton
 - Easton
 - Stoughton
 - Other
10. In your own words, what does it mean to have a diverse classroom? (fill in)
11. Would you describe the classrooms that you teach as diverse? Please explain.
12. I feel well prepared to teach in diverse classrooms.
 - Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree

13. Do you provide curriculum materials that represent the diversity of Massachusetts?
 -Yes
 -No
14. How frequently are you able to bring issues and topics of diversity and social justice into the classroom?
- Daily
 - Weekly
 - A few times a month
 - Monthly
 - Never
15. How frequently are you able to bring issues and topics of diversity and social justice into the classroom?
- Daily
 - Weekly
 - A few times a month
 - Monthly
 - Never
16. I feel well prepared to teach around the subject of diversity.
- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor Disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
17. The MA curriculum framework in 2018 states:
“An effective history and social science education incorporates diverse perspectives and acknowledges that perceptions of events are affected by race, ethnicity, culture, religion, education, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and personal experience. Teaching how the concepts of freedom, equality, the rule of law, and human rights have influenced United States and world history necessarily involves discussions of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other characteristics. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018)
- How easy or difficult has it been for you to integrate this into your classroom?
- Very easy
 - Easy
 - Neutral
 - Difficult
 - Very Difficult
18. What are the benefits or challenges of teaching this material? Please explain.

I’m interested in understanding further how teachers teach about diversity and social justice in their classrooms. Would you be willing to complete an in person interview to give me more information, I would be really interested in meeting with you in person.

- *If yes, please provide the best email and phone number to contact you with*

Appendix B

Teacher's Semi-Structured Interview*Investigation of Massachusetts Diversity Curriculum*

1. What is your definition of diversity?
2. Describe your classroom climate in regard to diversity?
3. Could you give me an example of a lesson you taught that included diverse perspectives
Talk me through how you use it?
 - How did it go/were the students responsive?

4. In the previous online survey you completed, Guiding Principle 2 of the MA curriculum framework was presented. I'm going to repeat it.

“An effective history and social science education incorporates diverse perspectives and acknowledges that perceptions of events are affected by race, ethnicity, culture, religion, education, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and personal experience. Teaching how the concepts of freedom, equality, the rule of law, and human rights have influenced United States and world history necessarily involves discussions of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other characteristics. (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018).

Based on this framework, how are you able to bring issues of diversity into the classroom?

5. How have students responded to possible harder topics and difficult moments?
6. What kind of resources do you have as a teacher to teach about diversity and social justice?
7. Have you had any professional development training around teaching diversity and social justice?
8. Do you think you need more resources and if so what would be helpful?
9. What do you feel could enhance your confidence around teaching diversity and in diverse classrooms?

Appendix C
Student Survey

Investigation of Massachusetts Diversity Curriculum

1. How old are you? (fill in)
2. What gender do you identify with?
 - Male
 - Female
 - Other
3. What is your Ethnicity?
 - White
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Black or African American
 - Native American or American Indian
 - Asian/ Pacific Islander
 - Other (fill in)
4. Are you a student at BSU?
 - Yes
 - no
5. If you are a student, what year are you?
 - First Year
 - Sophomore
 - Junior
 - Senior
 - Not Applicable
6. Did you attend a public middle school in Massachusetts?
 - Yes
 - No
7. Did you attend a public high school in Massachusetts?
 - Yes
 - no
8. What does the term diversity mean to you?
9. Was your school very diverse, if so please explain in what ways.
10. Did your middle school offer you a diverse education?
 - Yes
 - No
11. Did your high school offer you a diverse education?
 - Yes
 - No
12. Your classroom materials included multiple perspectives on history as well as past and present social issues.
 - Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Neither Agree nor Disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Strongly disagree
13. Guiding Principle #2 from the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework states as follows, **“An effective history and social science education incorporates diverse perspectives and acknowledges that**

perceptions of events are affected by race, ethnicity, culture, religion, education, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and personal experience. Teaching how the concepts of freedom, equality, the rule of law, and human rights have influenced United States and world history necessarily involves discussions of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other characteristics (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2018).

My school integrated this into my curriculum.

- Strongly agree
 - Somewhat agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Strongly disagree
14. It is important for schools to teach diversity even if their classroom is not diverse.
- Strongly Agree
 - Somewhat Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Somewhat disagree
 - Strongly disagree
15. [Open Response] After graduating high school, did you feel like you were provided with the right resources to enter and work in a diverse society? Please Explain.

Appendix D
INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

Dear Participant,

Thank you for participating in the study, **Investigating Diversity in Southern Massachusetts Classrooms**. I am interested in following up from the questions asked in the survey with additional questions about diversity and social justice in your classroom curriculum. I am particularly interested in any examples that you might be able to provide about your curriculum. I value both your comments and your time.

I would like to record our interview so that I can listen more carefully to what you say and follow-up with any additional questions. However, if you prefer to not be recorded then I will take notes. It is important to understand that anything you say, your words or comments will not be identifiable in any written or verbal report or paper written. No names will be recorded on any notes or on any transcript of our interview. The only identification of this interview will be the district that you teach in. Your interview will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team. Our findings from the interview will be summarized and presented in the aggregate, removing any identifiable details of participants. The interview transcripts will be kept private and in a locked or password-protected file. This audio recording will be deleted at the end of the study.

Although you may not personally benefit, this study is important as it begins to understand how teachers understand diversity and implement it in their classrooms. There are no foreseeable risks and you may refuse to answer particular questions and/ or can end the interview at any time, without penalty. Do you have any questions before we proceed?

If you agree to participate in the interview please sign below,

I give permission to proceed with the interview: _____

I give permission for this interview to be audio recorded: _____

If you have any questions after your participation in the interview or about the research study in general, please contact me or my Faculty Advisor, Dr. Margaret Boyd, using the contact details below. You will have a copy of this form to keep.

Thank you in advance.

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Appendix E
STUDENT RECRUITMENT FLYER



CALLING ALL BSU STUDENTS...

LETS DISCUSS DIVERSITY!



Open your phone camera, scan over the QR code, and follow the link. Take a short survey to help a fellow student gather their honors thesis research.

I am interested in understanding if and how your teachers included diversity and social justice content in your high school classrooms.

Thank you in advance!