

## **Learning Environment: Respecting Diversity and Exceptionality**

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*Education has a strong correlation with individual success. Many who select family and consumer sciences as a career technical pathway are students with exceptionalities and from diverse cultures. The family and consumer sciences (FCS) teacher educator needs to prepare the teacher candidate for their role as an educator. One part of that role is to ensure that all students regardless of culture, socioeconomic level, family structure, or disability have a safe, supportive learning environment that challenges their thought processes and respects unique differences. This article provides FCS teacher educators with recommendations for the preparation of teachers with background and information regarding the rationale for the National Standards for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences on Learning Environments. Also included are strategies and resources that enhance learning and facilitate respect for diversity.*

### **Introduction**

The *National Standards for Teachers of Family and Consumer Sciences* (National Association of Teacher Educators for Family and Consumer Sciences [NATEFACS], 2004) were developed to provide guidelines for the family and consumer sciences teacher educator to prepare family and consumer sciences (FCS) teachers. The purpose of this article is to provide a rationale for Standard Seven, Learning Environment and include strategies on how a FCS teacher educator can enable a FCS teacher to “create and implement a safe, supportive learning environment that shows sensitivity to diverse needs, values, and characteristics of students, families, and communities” (National Association of Teacher Educators of Family and Consumer Sciences [NATEFACS], 2004); thus enhancing the academic potential for all students. This Standard should not be addressed in isolation. In fact, the teacher educators should prepare teacher candidates to recognize the correlation between the learning environment and instructional strategies, curriculum development, and student organization integration for the development of a safe and supportive learning environment.

### **Significance of this National Standard**

Within the last three decades, the United States has seen a change in demographics which has resulted in an increase in the number of diverse families (Bailey, Skinner, Rodriguez, Gut, & Correa, 1999). In addition, landmark legislation, such as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (U.S. Congress, 2004) and No Child Left Behind (U.S. Congress, 2001), and changes with the education system (Lewis & Doorlag, 2006; Turnbull, Huerta, & Stowe, 2006; Yell & Drasgow, 2005) have greatly impacted student population. Data indicate that large portions of students who select career/technical classes are students with exceptionalities and students with limited English proficiency (Division of Vocational-Technical Education, 2005). According to Davis (2006) nearly 40% of the population in the United States represents an ethnic or racial minority and approximately 5.1 million children are English language learners (Snipes, Soga, & Uro, 2007). This may cause teachers to be faced with an ever increasing number of students who may hold cultural values, beliefs, preferences, and languages

different from their own (Sexton, Lobman, Constans, Snyder, & Ernest, 1997). In addition, this may result in family members who do not speak or understand English; therefore, making the adjustment into the community and school difficult. The family and consumer sciences teacher educator is the catalyst for providing family and consumer sciences teachers instructional activities, knowledge, and attitudes that will empower students from diverse backgrounds and students with exceptionalities to become proficient in society (Sileo & Prater, 1998).

### **Diversity**

Diverse does not mean deficient. Diversity includes a number of factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, language, and income. Each factor can influence the relationship between teacher, student, family, and community. According to Rehm and Allison (2006), all students are diverse, even those from the same cultural background. Respecting diversity requires that teachers look at all students with interest and openness, and utilize flexibility when providing instruction. Students may be considered at risk and need the development of resiliency factors to be successful. Teachers who have been taught to appreciate diversity are more self-confident, have increased abilities, and move beyond judging students by superficial attributes such as skin, color, speech patterns, and exceptionality (Sileo & Prater, 1998).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (U.S. Congress, 2004) was reauthorized in 2004 and revised to align with the six major principles of No Child Left Behind (U.S. Congress, 2001), that guaranteed each child an appropriate education (Lewis & Doorlag, 2006; Turnbull, Huerta, et al., 2006; Yell & Drasgow, 2005). Although there are six major principles, three are specifically related to learning environments: accountability, highly qualified, and scientifically based intervention. The first principle of NCLB, demands accountability as demonstrated with proficiency scores in major academic courses as assessed on standardized state assessments. Career and technical education has changed from the authorization of NCLB by the correlation of academic content in courses and by the sequencing of course work that leads to credentials or industry certification (Career Technical Education, 2008). The participation of students with disabilities in these assessments is provided under IDEA. The second principle, discusses teachers being highly qualified in the subject area taught. All teachers of children with special needs are required to be highly qualified according to IDEA. The final principle addresses the use of scientifically research-based curriculum utilized by highly qualified teachers. IDEA also “requires educators to use scientifically based methods in evaluating a student and then providing an appropriate education to the student” (Turnbull, Huerta, et al., p. 3).

The family and consumer sciences teacher meets these requirements by being highly qualified and incorporating principles of math, science, and language arts into the various courses. Research-based materials are provided to advance career and technical education programs (Career Technical Education, 2008). To become highly qualified, teachers must have a Bachelor of Science degree and demonstrate proficiency in the content area of family and consumer sciences (FCS). Proficiency is demonstrated by evidence of passing a national exam. The Carl D. Perkins Improvement Act of 2006 requires that alignment occur between family and consumer sciences course standards and academic course standards (U.S. Congress, 2006).

### **Students with Exceptionalities**

In order to provide an appropriate education for all students, educators must not discriminate on any basis. Public Law 94-142 of 1975, Public Law 105-17 of 1997, IDEA 2004,

Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Public Law 101-336, the American with Disabilities Act, guarantee the rights of individuals to be free from discrimination (Lewis & Doorlag, 2006; Turnbull, Huerta, et al., 2006). According to Lewis and Doorlag “all students” were originally defined by Goals 2000 as “including not only typical students and those who are academically talented but also students with disabilities, those from diverse cultural and ethnic groups, those with limited proficiency in English, and those who are disadvantaged” (p. 19).

Although IDEA does not address inclusion specifically, it does address the least restrictive environment, and mandates that all students be educated in their least restrictive environment, which is education with their peers to the maximum extent possible. On the continuum of services, the least restrictive environment is full-time placement in the general education classroom, and that classroom may be the family and consumer sciences classroom.

As aforementioned, many students are enrolled in a technical class with the probability of joining the work force rather than the collegiate life choice. The major academic emphasis in the high school curriculum does not meet the requirement of guaranteeing non-college bound students an appropriate education (Bowe, 2005). That is a conundrum for schools and the communities in which these students live. Dever and Knapczyk (1997) suggested a curriculum that would include the functional skills necessary for students seeking post high school employment. Where better to learn these everyday skills than in a family and consumer sciences classroom? The curriculum is established and students with exceptionalities as well as diverse learners would benefit from a life skill oriented curriculum. Family and consumer sciences teacher educators have the responsibility to prepare teacher candidates to teach students a wide variety of life skills such as money management, child development, parenting skills, nutrition, interpersonal relations, and career preparation (McCombie & Zimmer, 2007). Inclusive classrooms allow students to see that life skills, “a distinguishing characteristic of general and special education” (Turnbull, Turnbull, Whemeyer, & Parks, 2003, p. 67), impact quality of life for everyone. Benz, Lindstrom, and Yovanoff (2000) report on two studies, a quantitative and a qualitative, which examine both secondary and transitional procedures. There were six factors discussed which have significant impact on post school outcomes. Two of the six align with the premise that teaching functional skills relate to post school outcomes. The two factors are:

Participation in vocational classes during the last 2 years of high school, especially classes that offer occupationally-specific instruction, [and] competence in functional academics (e.g., reading, math, writing, and problem solving); community living (e.g., money management, community access); personal-social (e.g., getting along with others); vocational (e.g., career awareness, job search); and self-determination (e.g., self-advocacy, goal setting) skills. (Benz et al., 2000, p. 2; Benz, Lindstrom, Unruh, & Waintrup, 2004, p. 2)

Both studies discussed Youth Transition Program for students with disabilities who will require additional assistance to transition after high school to the work force. It was noted that 82% of participants acquired post school employment or training at the end of the program (Benz et al., 2000, p. 3). FCS classes offer the real world approach (Reiseberg, 1998) where students have the opportunity to merge skills with real life situations.

### **Gender**

As an appropriate learning environment, the safe and supportive classroom has many important characteristics. Among the important characteristics, it is a place where learning is

expected, bullying is prohibited, and both genders are welcomed. Family and consumer sciences teachers must be aware of gender bias in schools so that both genders are equally welcomed and represented positively in the family and consumer sciences (FCS) classroom. In today's society it is helpful for all members in the family to be proficient with the multiple roles of the family. Similarly, it is important to show a balance of males and females in all family roles. The course content in the FCS classroom provides an appropriate educational setting for students to explore supportive and independent gender roles.

### **Socioeconomic Level**

The socioeconomic level of a student includes not only income but educational level of the family members as well as the status associated with family's occupation. One in five of America's children lives in poverty and approximately one third of students with exceptionalities come from a household with below poverty incomes (Turnbull, Turnbull, Erwin, & Soodak, 2006). In the family and consumer sciences classroom a respectful and supportive learning environment includes teaching strategies and projects that are accessible and feasible to all students regardless of socioeconomic level.

### **Literature Review and Rationale for the Standard**

Historically, John Dewey (1933) highlighted three important characteristics of effective teaching. These characteristics include open-mindedness, wholeheartedness, and intellectual responsibility. Open-mindedness refers to the ability to be free from prejudices. Wholeheartedness refers to the enthusiasm the teacher has for teaching. Finally, intellectual responsibility refers to the desire to keep current in pedagogy and to develop teaching strategies that are engaging for the learner. These qualities are relevant and effective in today's educational environment. Family and consumer sciences teacher educators need to stress to teacher candidates the importance of developing a trusting non judgmental relationship with all students and families regardless of socioeconomic level and other characteristics. Utilizing these qualities ensures that teachers will create a learning environment that is sensitive to the needs of all students and families as indicated by Standard Seven.

The current focus is to develop characteristics necessary to be an effective teacher for diverse populations. In an article by Grant and Gillette (2006), they indicated that it is not enough to have teachers enter the profession who love children and have a desire to help them learn. These characteristics are often forgotten when faced with difficulty planning instruction and the daily requirements of the school environment. Ingersoll reported (as cited in Grant & Gillette) that teachers leave their profession at a higher rate than other professional fields. Research by Grant and Gillette identified several characteristics needed to be an effective teacher regardless of "where, who, or what" the teachers will teach. These skills include the ability to develop curriculum that is relevant to the student; therefore, meeting the student's educational and social needs. Consequently the skills of reflection, such as the assessment of student learning and identification of problems, are helpful in teaching all populations, including diverse populations.

### **Knowledge Necessary to Address the Standard**

There are three main stages of learning (Lewis & Doorlag, 2006). A teacher must understand these stages to determine where each student is in terms of acquisition, maintenance, and generalization. In the acquisition stage a student is acquiring knowledge or initial learning.

Maintenance involves maintaining and recalling knowledge that has been acquired. The final stage is generalization; it is where true learning occurs. In the generalization stage a student can apply knowledge learned to new situations. Learning problems can occur in any stage. Students also bring their own prior knowledge and experiences or lack of experience and knowledge to each stage. Therefore, for learning to occur, the student must find meaning in what is being taught, and the teacher must understand how best to motivate the student to learn. Ultimately the content must have relevance to the learner. This may require the family and consumer sciences teacher to “think outside the box” when planning relevant instructional strategies that recognize and respect the unique characteristics of learners as stated in Standard Seven. An example of the stages of learning involves learning how to write a check. In the acquisition stage, the student needs to learn the parts of a check and how one writes a check. An activity during the maintenance stage may include a student searching a catalog or the Internet for an item of choice. The student then writes a check to the purchasing source for the correct amount. At the generalization stage the student would be able to go to a store, purchase desired items, and pay with a check. Grant and Gilliam (2006) stated that strong communication and collaboration skills along with using technology are also necessary to be an effective teacher with diverse populations. Using technology, as a tool for learning or as a way to enhance collaboration with other peers, the home, and the community, also enhances a teacher’s ability to be effective in providing a supportive learning environment for diverse populations. Research on educational equity by Persell (1997) identified that teachers with higher expectations for students have increased interaction, give more praise, have better behaved students, and demonstrate increased student learning.

### **At-Risk and Resiliency**

As noted earlier, diverse students may be considered at risk. At-risk students are often in danger of dropping out of school. In urban schools nationwide 79% of students are African American, Hispanic, and Asian American. In addition, 64% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch (Snipes, Horwitz, Soga, & Casserly, 2008). This has caused educators to examine resiliency in regard to academic success. Resiliency is the ability to rise above adversity and develop strength through hardships ultimately becoming an emotionally healthy adult with a productive life (Smokowski, 1998). Progress has been made in the understanding of the resiliency process. The emphasis has begun to shift from a focus on the cause, to one of prevention and intervention. Prevention programming focuses on circumventing situations before an individual experiences the effect (Smokowski). In addition, multidimensional long-term education programs that provide follow-up support have been identified as more successful in the development of resiliency than brief, limited programs.

### **Diversity and Exceptionality**

Awareness of diversity and exceptionality in the family and consumer sciences classroom, which may be deemed the least restrictive environment for many students, is essential. Family and consumer sciences teachers should be mindful of the values and ideologies that individuals and families use to define themselves. According to Allen (2005), cultural competency is an awareness of oppression faced by others and active involvement in social justice. It is important to recognize popular opinion and the existing power relationship used by schools that students and families encounter day to day. Students in special education classrooms may be looked down upon by others in the school environment. In addition, many individuals

from marginalized populations (minorities) face oppression and discrimination. “The greater the stigma attached to an ethnic group, the more difficult it is for mainstream professionals to recognize cultural strengths that are different from their own” (Harry, 2002, p. 132). Including students with exceptionalities and students from diverse cultures in the regular classroom provides them with opportunities to participate with peers and gain skills and self-esteem. Failure to do this will inhibit the development of a safe and supportive classroom for all students. In addition, the family and consumer sciences classroom provides the perfect environment to showcase the diversity of family roles and traditions, child care practices, and other unique perspectives of family and culture.

The role of the family and consumer sciences teacher educator is to prepare family and consumer sciences teachers that acceptance must first come from the classroom teacher. If the teacher is accepting of students with exceptionalities and those from diverse cultures, the students in the classroom will follow suit. Churchill, Mulholland, and Cepello (2008) discuss that behavioral interventions include using modeling techniques to help reinforce a change in behavior. If teachers accept all students and model behavior coupled with reinforcement then changing behaviors may occur. Blasi’s (2002) study prepared individuals to support diversity by shifting the focus from deficient to one of strength. The goal was for pre-service teachers to view students and families through a strength-based perspective and look for potential instead of deficiencies. This study used the term “of promise” when describing students and families living in poverty, belonging to a cultural/ethnic minority, a family having a non-traditional family structure, and a family who spoke a first language other than English. Utilizing this strategy the teacher educator can instill in the teacher candidate the importance of being non-judgmental and accepting of all families while recognizing the strength of the families and culture. Characteristics needed by individuals to support diversity are (a) self-observation, (b) an awareness of one’s environment, (c) one’s influence on others, and (d) a flexible attitude toward cultural norms and language (Harry, 2002). These qualities will go far in enhancing the environment of the family and consumer sciences classroom.

### **Correlation of Family and Consumer Sciences to the National Standard**

Often, the family and consumer sciences teacher is responsible for teaching skills and fostering resiliency; therefore, the family and consumer sciences curriculum can be viewed as having a focus on prevention. The curriculum content areas, such as family; parenting; consumer and family resources; food science, dietetics, and nutrition; interpersonal relationships; and human development, provide all individuals with information needed to face adversity and manage resources well. McMillian and Reed (1994) isolated several factors that contribute to academic success with students who are at-risk. These factors include individual attributes such as intrinsic motivation, a positive attitude, using time wisely, forming a close bond with one’s caregiver, and using school as support outside the home. McMillian and Reed concluded that utilizing instructional strategies that promote a sense of internal control, goal setting, and personal responsibility can foster resiliency that can lead to academic success. Current research by Hanson and Kim (2007) developed a self reporting survey that indicates how educators can improve the school environment to promote resiliency in children. The nature of the family and consumer sciences curriculum and the course competencies allow the student and the teacher to develop a rapport that will foster the growth of individual students. Family and consumer sciences multi-dimensional curriculum offers instruction in goal setting, personal responsibility,

and decision-making skills, while providing the student with choices and opportunities for individual expression.

Students enrolled in family and consumer sciences develop skills that enable them to meet the challenges of society. Family and consumer sciences content encourage students to develop goals, which provide a sense of purpose and meaning. Through interactive instruction, students gain knowledge, skills, techniques in leadership, and effective communication skills (American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences [AAFCS], 2008). These skills ultimately impact quality of life. Quality of life is the ability to satisfy normative expectations and meet needs in major life settings, such as home, family, work, and school, while utilizing available resources and opportunities (Bailey et al., 1998).

Park, Turnbull, and Turnbull (2002) identified three components of quality of life. These included having needs met, enjoying life together, and having opportunities to achieve goals that have meaning. The definition of quality of life varies and is as unique as each individual. Therefore, students enrolled in family and consumer sciences courses develop skills to use throughout the lifespan. These skills can help them achieve meaningful goals and meet the everyday demands of society. Finally, the Family, Career and Community Leadership Association (FCCLA), the student leadership organization associated with family and consumer sciences, provides extracurricular activities that are important for the development of resiliency. FCCLA provides an outlet for expression, application of learning (generalization stage), and opportunity for success (Family, Career and Community Leadership Association [FCCLA], 2008). These positive experiences may help the student to develop a sense of belonging.

### **Effective Strategies and Resources**

As a family and consumer sciences teacher, it is important to foster culturally responsive pedagogical strategies that will demonstrate high expectations and acceptance of cultural and learning style diversity. These steps will impact the climate of the classroom. Incorporating an accepting and flexible attitude will enhance the learning potential for all students (Rhem & Allison, 2006). Davis (2006) suggested that in order for diverse learners to feel acceptance, their cultural differences must be viewed as assets rather than deficits. Students will imitate the attitude the teacher is modeling, so teachers must be accepting of all students and recognize their strengths. Sousa (2001) stated that a student must feel physically safe and emotionally secure before learning takes place. Since emotions affect cognition, a teacher must be sure that the classroom environment is one where all students, regardless of their gender, culture, or exceptionality are emotionally and physically safe.

What is not so obvious is having the teachers know themselves and understand that they, too, have a culture that can be imposed upon their students. Davis (2006) devoted an entire chapter of *How to teach students who don't look like you: Culturally relevant teaching strategies* to reflective questions that each teacher must answer to understand his/her beliefs so the diverse learner can be reached, supported, and taught. One must reach across cultural differences which are enhanced through dialog and an understanding of personal belief systems. The teacher must become "culturally proficient." That does not mean that one must understand everything about everyone's culture, but the teacher must acknowledge how beliefs impact actions; building respect and accommodations of cultural aspects of students' lives formulates a positive belief system (Davis)

Classroom activities that validate other cultures so students gain respect and become informed learners about the world should be a vital part of the curriculum. This can be

accomplished by inserting content on how different cultures embrace many topics, such as child-rearing practices, family interactions, food or food preparation techniques, finances, and family values.

### **Understanding Biases**

As previously stated, teachers must understand and explore their own biases before they can adequately address diversity in their classes and lessons. According to Banks and Banks (1997) six biases exist in teaching materials: (a) linguistic bias, (b) stereotyping, (c) invisibility, (d) imbalance, (e) unreality, and (f) fragmentation. Family and consumer sciences teacher educators should instruct family and consumer sciences teachers to avoid the six biases by evaluating materials for equity and imbalance. Negative biases and stereotyping may be exhibited in the classroom by language, tone of voice, and images. Here are some suggestions to help identify and/or eliminate a bias.

1. If the material contains biases, confront the bias rather than ignore it. Teach students about the various forms of bias (textbooks, bulletin boards, DVDs, videos, etc.) (Banks & Banks).
2. Use supplementary materials when the textbook is biased.
3. Analyze the class seating chart to see if there are students grouped together by race/gender. Intervene when students segregate by race/gender, and encourage and praise when diverse groups work together.
4. Continue reading and attending professional development in the areas of educational equity.
5. Learn about verbal and non-verbal communication from all cultures in the class. Be aware of mixed messages or words that may mean something totally different in the American culture than another culture.
6. Reflect on personal biases and beliefs and then leave personal biases outside the school building and become the best teacher for all children.

### **Creating Culturally Diverse Classrooms**

To avoid learning outcomes that reflect negative, unrealistic, and fragmented biases, make sure curriculum and other resources, such as audio visual, bulletin boards, and posters, represent both males and females in supportive and nurturing roles within the family. To address invisibility make sure each cultural group in your class as well as individuals with exceptionalities are also depicted in a positive light (Banks & Banks, 1997). The following is a list of suggestions to facilitate the creation of a culturally diverse classroom.

1. Since teachers are models for their students they should use language that respects all diversities. An example would be to use person first language by referring to the student first, such as “the child with special needs rather than the handicapped student”.
2. Discuss contributions of Americans who are minorities or from other cultures such as George Washington Carver, Martin Luther King, Maya Angelou, and Cesar Chaves.
3. Display articles and advertisements that discuss diverse cultures.
4. Display simple phrases or label items in the classroom in multiple languages. Visual aids are more effective when they are graphic and pictorial.
5. Build a classroom community where all are treated with respect (Davis, 2006).

6. Use cooperative learning and activities that enhance a mutual respect and ones that allow students to learn about each other (Davis).
7. Treat each culture as a unique culture by not lumping together all minorities or exceptionalities. Do not assume that all students that speak Spanish speak the same dialect and can understand each other. For example, there are many dialects in Guatemala.
8. Encourage participation of all students even if it requires the uses of nods, hand signals, and visuals.
9. Use peer tutoring and collaborative activities to assist students.

### **Implementing Educational Strategies**

Significant landmark legislation, such as IDEA and NCLB, was passed to provide equal treatment and full educational opportunities for individuals with exceptionalities. By receiving appropriate services and support, individuals with exceptionalities are able to achieve at levels that were once considered impossible. This includes graduation from high school, going to college, attending vocational/technical school, and becoming gainfully employed. However, students may have needs that challenge the knowledge and resources of teachers and programs (Wheeler, 2000). Students that IDEA has identified as mentally retarded or cognitively impaired may be the most challenging in regard to what constitutes appropriate services and support.

When focusing on students with cognitive impairments, the major approach is habilitation (Lewis & Doorlag, 2006). Habilitation is essentially preparing students to become successful adults. This is accomplished by teaching the most basic and functional skills. Functional skills are those skills, which are required for the successful completion of everyday life tasks and the skills required to keep a job. These skills include beginning work promptly, task engagement, task completion, and cooperating with co-workers. When planning to meet the diverse needs of your students it is very important to know your audience. The teacher must have knowledge of the stages of learning and of the various learning styles. They must also provide more than one mode of presenting information and use alternatives such as pictures, translated materials, and physical modification of equipment. When working with students with exceptionalities, highlight the strengths of the individual student. Here are some suggestions that are functional in nature.

1. Make appropriate accommodations and modifications in your teaching and assessing so that all children have their needs met (Davis, 2006). An accommodation is when you do not change the curriculum or standards. An example for an accommodation is when you have a student following a recipe which requires chopped onions. The student can use a pizza cutter to chop the onions if using a knife is difficult. The standard is not changed. A modification is when you do change the curriculum and standards for a student. If that same student uses onion flakes rather than chopping fresh onions because of some reason she/he cannot chop onions, then a modification has been made because the standard has been altered when the psychomotor skill was deleted.
2. When using computer programs to translate, it is better to use isolated words and phrases. When whole paragraphs are translated meaning may be loss so it may help to use bilingual professionals to promote accuracy, communication, and instruction (Fradd, 1999).

3. Organize a service event that the class orchestrates. This can be a local event such as a blood drive, a recycling project, or a FCCLA project. It can also be a national service event for the victims of Hurricane Katrina or other natural disasters suffered in our country.
4. Create a Parent Resource Library where books on parenting and community programs are available on loan.
5. Create a classroom Web page or newsletter and feature a specific student each week.
6. To increase attention and retention of what is being taught provide opportunities for practice and repetition, problem solving activities, and application of new ideas and information to daily life. This makes learning relevant for the student.
7. Service learning, which benefits all students, is an effective teaching strategy for at-risk students. This strategy can be one of the factors in promoting resiliency. Service learning projects require students to give to something beyond themselves such as family, peers, and community. It involves addressing real life problems while utilizing the content of course standards. Service learning can easily be incorporated into the family and consumer sciences curriculum and the student leadership organization FCCLA. Students gain decision-making skills and increase problem solving skills, collaboration, and communication skills. Service learning projects are helpful in changing the climate of the classroom to one that is focused on helping others.

### **Conclusion**

Research by Rehm and Allison (2006) indicated that family and consumer sciences teachers are aware of diversity in the classroom. However, most of the modifications for diverse students only include grading and presentation of material. The climate of the classroom was not modified. As stated earlier, students must feel safe and emotionally secure for learning to take place. Incorporating an openness and flexible attitude enhances the learning potential for all students. The strategies and Web links suggested below can be used by the family and consumer sciences (FCS) teacher educator in providing the teacher candidate with techniques to enhance the climate of the classroom, so that it is supportive and respectful of all students including those with exceptionalities and those from every culture. Since education impacts the success of the individual, families, schools, and communities are influenced by our roles as teacher educators in meeting this National Standard in an effort to enable the family and consumer sciences teachers to meet the needs of all students. All students regardless of culture, family structure, or disability, deserve a safe, supportive learning environment that challenges their thought processes and respects their unique differences. The teachers need not only to establish and maintain such a learning environment, but also utilize teaching strategies that enhance the strength of the students selecting a career/technical pathway. The family and consumer sciences teacher educator can incorporate these strategies and suggestions into courses for teacher candidates such as the introduction to teaching course, material and methods course, observation and field experience seminar, and student teaching seminar. The teacher educator must also demand that teacher candidates explore their own bias before entering the classroom. Failure to establish and maintain a desirable learning environment and/or use teaching strategies that motivate students to reach their full potential may result in low enrollment and possible closure of the family and consumer sciences program which will result in students that have unmet needs, and as educators we cannot allow that to happen!

**Annotated List of Suggested Web Sites**

**American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities**

Web Link: <http://www.aamr.org>

This site is part of a professional organization.

**Brigham Young University**

Web Link: <http://education.byu.edu/diversity/activities.html>

This Web site is associated with Brigham Young University and offers links to over 12 sites for lesson plans to multicultural monthly calendars.

**EdChange**

Web Link: <http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/activityarch.html>

This Web site contains awareness activities. There are a variety of topics from understanding prejudice to collaborative problem solving.

**JumpStart**

Web Link: <http://www.jumpstart.com>

This link is associated with the Knowledge Adventure Store, but it does have several free online games and a learning style quiz.

**Just Choices**

Web Link: <http://www.justchoices.com/index.html>

This Web site provides examples of worksheets, posters, and a video excerpt along with a listing of resources. Teachers can order a free copy for exploring social justice.

**LD Online**

Web Link: <http://www.ldonline.org>

This site has a plethora of information about learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder (ADHD) for parents and teachers. Links can also be accessed in Spanish.

**LD Resources**

Web Link: <http://www.ldresources.com>

This has been an online resource since 1995 and is now considered a Weblog. It has several links to articles and information for professionals, parents, and persons with learning disabilities.

**PBS**

Web Link: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/misunderstoodminds>

This is an interactive Web site where parents and teachers can go and experience what children with disabilities experience. It is produced by WGBH in Boston.

**Tufts University**

Web Link: <http://www.cfw.tufts.edu/viewsite.asp?categoryid=3&topicid=62&site=263>

This Web site is associated with Tufts University, Child and Family Web Guide. It has links to articles on multicultural education with advice and suggestions for parents and teachers.

#### Wilderdom

Web Link: <http://wilderdom.com/games/MulticulturalExperientialActivities.html>

This Web site offers more than 200 games and activities for multiculturalism.

#### Wisconsin Assistive Technology Initiative

Web Link: <http://www.wati.org>

This site has information on curriculum, assistive technology services and products, training programs, and a library.

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