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ASSESSING THE EFFECTS OF EXPOSURE TO MULTICULTURAL  
LEARNING ON A SCHOOL POPULATION  
WITH LIMITED DIVERSITY

by  
Lynda Anderson-Towns

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
of  
The Graduate Division  
at  
Rowan University  
May, 1999

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_ Professor

Date Approved May, 1999

## Abstract

Lynda Anderson-Towns

Assessing the Effects of Exposure to Multicultural Learning on a School Population with Limited Diversity.

1999

Dr. Ronald Capasso  
School Administration

This Master's project was designed to assess the effects of infusing various multicultural activities in a rural school with limited diversity. It focused on integrating monthly multicultural activities into the curriculum of first grade students to increase their sensitivity and appreciation of diversity.

The study utilized qualitative data gathered through surveys, interviews and observations completed at Dennis Township Elementary School. The first grade students were exposed to a series of multicultural activities which included storytelling, mini-lessons and cultural presentation throughout a six month time span. Students' attitudes toward diversity were measured by pre-test and post-test surveys preceding and subsequent to the multicultural activities.

Results showed that the first grade students were more receptive to accepting minority children as friends, teaming with them for class activities and learning about their cultures after being exposed to multicultural programs.

Conclusions drawn from the survey responses and other informal evaluation suggested that the exposure to the cultural activities contributed to the awareness and

appreciation of diversity in the first grade students. Future direction regarding diversity in Dennis Township Elementary School should address creating opportunities to connect with the high school's ethnic clubs for multicultural activities, contacting local organizations for minority role models and concentrating efforts upon hiring minority educators within the school district.

## Mini Abstract

Lynda Anderson-Towns

Assessing the Effects of Exposure to Multicultural Learning on a School Population with Limited Diversity.

1999

Dr. Ronald Capasso  
School Administration

This study examined the effects of multicultural programs and activities on first grade students in a K-8 Cape May County rural school district with limited diversity. The first grade elementary students' attitudes toward diversity were measured by pre-test and post test surveys preceding and subsequent to a series of multicultural activities presented within a six month time span at Dennis Township Elementary School in Dennis Township, New Jersey. The results strongly indicated that after program exposure, there was an increased level of student acceptance towards minority students as well as an appreciation of multicultural experiences presented within the school setting. Specifically, the conclusion drawn from the study indicates that when students have more opportunities to interact with students from other ethnic groups, their appreciation of diversity increases.

## Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank God, my personal savior, whom I continue to surrender my will, my way, the fear that I won't do it right, on time or in a way that makes people happy. I now understand that God is enough.

I am eternally grateful to my husband, Bill and daughter, Whitney, who waited patiently for me to arrive home from late classes and endured countless hours of my involvement in computer, project and phone time. I must especially thank my twin sons, Jason and Joseph, who continually gave me the inspiration to stay on the path.

Thanks to my co-partner, Gladys Lauriello, whose sense of humor and certainly her computer skills saved the day on many occasions as we traveled this journey together. A special thanks to my mentor, Karen Buesing, for guiding me through the creative process with sensitivity and insight. Her support, wisdom and unyielding faith were invaluable to me throughout the entire internship.

I offer sincere appreciation to my colleagues, especially Ms. Charlotte Sadler, MTHS student members of Ebony Awareness and Positive Black Generation and the faculty and administration at Dennis Township Elementary School.

Finally, my sincere appreciation is extended to Dr. Ronald Capasso whose commitment and determination to provide us with a valuable and realistic internship led to a true leadership experience in education. He truly exemplified a progressive and professional educational leader who espoused high standards and challenged you to meet them.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Focus Of The Study

In an ideal world, students would have the opportunity to interact with many people of various race, class, culture, ethnicity, and ability. Yet, in the real world, they are often isolated and segregated never seeing, meeting, or interacting with a world of "others" (Crawley-Long, 1995). Indeed, since the United States is one of the most ethnically and culturally diverse nations, multicultural education holds implications for education, even in places where the local population is not so diverse. Current literature reveals that effective organizations and visionary leaders should consider a broad multicultural framework to help students overcome the cultural isolation that the lack of diversity may create.

It is the educational leader's responsibility to establish a clear, educationally focused vision within the organization that will support the values and goals related to equity, justice, respect, and concern for the academic success of all students.

Preceding 1992, Middle Township High School flourished under the direction of an extremely strong and assertive administrative team. The team consisted of a principal who had served for thirteen years and a vice-principal who spent his entire instructional and administrative career at Middle Township High School. A dynamic superintendent with a vision who had been in his position for seventeen years further supported the team. The school climate began to descend with the departure of the superintendent and principal.

The death of the much beloved vice principal added to descending climate at the high school. The atmosphere at the high school rapidly deteriorated, and the staff morale lowered, while student disciplinary actions increased. This was exacerbated by the continued turnover of vice principals, the lack of a consistent disciplinary program, and the absence of programs designed to provide a smooth transition for the students from sending districts into the high school. Particularly disturbing was the increasing number of student racial conflicts, which usually arose in the spring and involved the minority students from the home district and students from the rural sending district. For example, with the inception of newer ethnic clubs for the minority students, designed to empower the cultural groups, a small faction of the white students, mostly from the rural sending district, began to informally meet to, according to their beliefs, create a "mirror" club that promoted white supremacy. This group even named themselves the "hicks" and were often identified by the wearing of large silver belt buckles and clothing with the insignia of the Confederacy.

Previously, these students were mostly struggling and disenfranchised students from one particular area who simply interacted within their own circle of friends, but more recently a growing dissatisfaction with not being included in many of the "special" trips and activities offered to the minority students had brought on a decidedly more racist attitude which eventually evolved into racial confrontations. One such racially motivated confrontation, for example, resulted in the long-term injury of a faculty member who had attempted to break up the fight. The effects of these confrontations and the lack of tolerance led administrators and teachers to the realization that interaction with minorities must be introduced in the rural sending district at a much earlier grade

level. It became apparent that the goal of addressing racism at Middle Township High School must involve the cooperation and support of the sending district. Critical to success was increased interaction with minority students as well as earlier exposure and implementation of multicultural curricular and programmatic changes for the rural district.

### Purpose of the Study

The diversity project will accomplish several objectives. Participants in the study -- elementary, middle and high school students, teachers and administrators-- will have the opportunity to reflect on a myriad of cultural activities and programs, while focusing on the degrees of influence with regards to change in attitudes toward tolerance. Teachers, counselors, support staff, and administrators will examine and determine the need for curricular and programmatic changes as is revealed by the study's action plan in coordination with the organizational culture.

Using data collected,, through research instruments, informal observations, and interaction with participants in the study, a committee will make recommendations for the development of a plan to continue articulation with the high school, infuse opportunities for multicultural experiences, inservice teacher, involve parent and community members as desired for the organizational culture. The intended outcome is to increase multicultural exposure and sensitivity in a rural, less- diversified school district to foster a positive transition to a multi-ethnic high school.

The diversity project will have extensive value for the intern wit regards to personal leadership development. The specific product outcome utilized in this domain

includes skills in fact finding, planning, and conducting meetings, questioning techniques, reflecting upon beliefs, and coordinating programs.

If the project's outcome is successful, there will be an increased sensitivity to differences in others and an improved learning climate for the rural sending district and the high school. The organization will benefit as all involved including students, administrators, and faculty support the need to respect and appreciate diversity.

### Definitions

The following words and phrases are unique to this study of diversity within a rural school district.

1. Multicultural education - any set of processes by which schools work with rather than against groups (Sleeter, 1992)
2. Vision - an image of what the school can and should become
3. Cultural isolation - the lack of differing ethnic and religious backgrounds in a particular area
4. CRC - Culturally Relevant Curriculum or curriculum which includes specific characteristics that utilizes the students' diverse backgrounds and increases the level of knowledge about the country's diverse cultural heritage
5. Culture - any group with coherent norms and traditions that help members engage in the world around them (Oliver, 1992)
6. Culturally based learning style - teaching methods that have been shown to work well with culturally or linguistically different students
7. Buzz word - the latest terminology or trend in a field of study

8. Inclusive curriculum - curriculum that reflects the cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity of society
9. DFG – District Factor Grouping

### Limitations of the Study

The resulting research findings of this study can not be generalized past Middle Township High School or Dennis Township School District. Every thing about this study is unique including the people involved, the specific makeup of the school populations, and the particular learning climates present in each organization.

The suggested recommendations for achieving diversity in a rural school may be utilized in another organization, however, multicultural programmatic implementation may be as varied as the organizations involved. Even with three other schools in the district, the information garnered in this study is specific to the school in which the study occurred.

The accompanying recommendations for providing multicultural experiences in a school with little diversity may benefit another organization, but programmatic results may differ greatly from one organization to another. The specific elements of implementation should be considered as a limitation for generalization to other entities.

### Setting of the Study

#### Cape May County and Middle Township and Dennis Township

Middle Township is a unique community which encompasses more than 72 square miles located in the center of Cape May County. According to the 1990 Census results, Cape May County has a population of 95,089 - 93% Caucasian, 6% African-American, and 1% other races (Cape May County, 1993). At the time of the study there were 14,685 school age children in the county, with 7,482 being male and 7,203 being

female. There were a total of 85,537 housing units, but only 37,856 of those units are occupied because Cape May County is a resort area, and many houses are used seasonally for recreation. The median household income was \$30,435, and the per capita income was \$15,538.

Cape May Court House is home to Middle Township Public Schools. The town was originally known as Middletown, but the name was changed when the post office was established in 1803. Today, "Court House" is one of the many neighborhoods that make up Middle Township. It is also the host community for the County Government of five Freeholders as well as the County Seat. In addition to Cape May Court House, Middle Township encompasses the neighborhoods of Burleigh, Dias Creek, Del Haven, Goshen, Grassy Sound, Green Creek, Reed's Beach, Rio Grande, Swainton, and Whitesboro.

Middle Township has an ever-increasing population of 14,771 according to the 1990 Census results. Of this total, 85% are Caucasian, 13% are African-American, and 2% account for other races. Middle Township has 20% of the County's school age children enrolled in its schools (Cape May County, 1993).

Middle Township is governed by three elected officials -- one mayor and two committeemen. The Township Committee has always supported Middle Township Public Schools; in fact, one of the Committeemen is a teacher at the high school. The two organizations have worked closely together for years and have recently developed both formal and informal interlocal agreements. The school district and the Township share busing, grounds and maintenance, paving, and police services.

### Setting of the Study

Middle Township Public Schools is a K-12 district, which draws students from all the neighborhoods of Middle Township. In addition, three K-8 sending districts (Avalon, Stone Harbor, and Dennis Township) send students to Middle Township High School and pay tuition.

Middle Township Public Schools consist of four schools servicing grades K-12. Elementary #1 includes grades K-2, Elementary #2 houses grades 3-5, Elementary #4, or the Middle School, includes grades 6-8, and Middle Township High School is home to grades 9-12. The diverse areas from which the students come result in a mixed culture of values and beliefs in each building. Because there is only one school for each respective grade level, all students are fully integrated.

At the time of the study there was a total of 2,834 students enrolled in Middle Township School District. This figure includes resident students as well as those received from sending districts, and the total represents a 22% minority population.

A total of 242 teachers are employed by the district. Forty-nine percent of these instructors have less than ten years of teaching experience, and only 27% have a master's degree or higher. This low figure is due in part to the fact that the closest institution offering graduate level studies is 55 miles north of Cape May County. During the last few years, however, more and more courses have been offered in Cape May County through the Education Institute of Rowan University and also through Rutgers University. Many teachers are taking advantage of this opportunity to further their educations.

Middle Township Public Schools is run by an elected nine member Board of Education, all of whom reside in Middle Township. Due to enrollment figures, the sending district of Dennis Township also has representation on the Board, but this member may only vote on matters that relate to the high school.

The administrative structure for the Middle Township School District begins at the top with the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Robert D. Elder, who began his tenure in August, 1996. The next level of administration includes the Director of Special Education, Supervisor of Curriculum and Instruction, and the building principals. Included in the next level are the Transportation Supervisor, Supervisor of Maintenance, assistant principals, and subject area department chairpersons.

Middle Township School District operates within a total budget just under \$24 million and is funded by a combination of New Jersey state aid, local taxes and other sources such as federal aid and local district surplus. Middle Township receives 45.6% of its revenues from State Aid. This seemingly high amount of State funding is due in part to Middle's classification as a District Factor Grouping (DFG) B. Districts are rated by using various factors including parental education, occupations, income, poverty level families, unemployment, and urbanization. All districts in New Jersey are divided into ten groups and labeled from A to J. Middle Township is in one of the lowest groups, which contains almost all of the cities and poor rural districts in the state.

The local taxes contribute 44.1% of the revenues, and 10.2% comes from other resources. From the total budget, 46.4% is spent on instruction. Overall, the district spends \$6,538 per pupil, which is below the state average of \$8013.



## Middle Township High School

The present high school building is the fourth to house the high school. From 1907 to the present, the enrollment has grown from 39 students to over 1,000 students. This enrollment includes Middle Township students along with students from Dennis Township, Stone Harbor and Avalon. The present building is located on # 1 Penkethman Way, which is off the Garden State Parkway. The Parkway and Routes 47 and 55 provide easy access to the high school from all directions.

Groundbreaking ceremonies for the construction of the present building took place in October 1960, and the first classes moved into the building early in 1962. The original structure had three wings referred to as A, B, and C, but its blueprint contained plans for an additional wing. D wing was added in 1970 and an addition to C wing was built in 1973. In 1992, a 7 million-dollar Performing Arts Center was constructed which included a 1,000-seat auditorium, a new band room, choral room, and four small classrooms. Presently, the building includes 48 teaching classrooms, a guidance suite, administrative offices, a gym with four teaching stations, and a media center including a writing lab used for group instruction or for independent student work. Adequate playing fields are located on the East Side of the building and two trailers have been positioned on the south side of the school. One of these trailers provides department chairpersons with office space.

Middle Township High School is a community of learning whose common purpose is to educate and train its diverse population of students to be literate, understanding, and active citizens who can perpetuate the tradition of an educated, productive life in a complex, ever-changing, democratic society. It is believed that life,

experience, and reality are a continuum, and that the high school is merely an interlude in students' lives that they all must pass through on their way to their respective futures. Every student is offered the opportunity to acquire the intellectual, physical, and social skills necessary to successfully function in society today. These skills are presented through a flexible program of interaction and instruction in basic skills, general knowledge, and cultural appreciation, with additional opportunities in career education, economic skills, occupational competency, and preparation for a changing society (Middle Township High School Philosophy Statement, 1992 Middle States Report).

Middle Township High School's curriculum reflects a traditional approach to education. Emphasis is placed on skill development and the ability to use the skills effectively. There are three basic instructional programs available for students: School-to-Success, College Preparatory, and Honors. Cape May County Technical High School provides full day and shared time programs for vocationally oriented students as well as for students with special needs.

Academically talented students are offered a full range of scholastically demanding and college preparatory subjects. Honors courses are available in English, social studies, science, and math. Advanced Placement courses are also available in these disciplines as well as in computer science. Presently, Middle Township High School offers a total of eight Advanced Placement courses and offers three dual credit science courses through an agreement with Cumberland County College.

A full college preparatory program is offered with specialized sciences, math through calculus, computer science, computer programming, and four levels of foreign language in French, Latin, and Spanish. A School-to-Success program is also offered

which leads to shadowing, mentoring, and work-study programs in Cooperative Office Education and Cooperative Industrial Education. Special Education and Compensatory Education in English and math are also available for students needing specialized assistance.

Students must accumulate 120 credits in order to graduate from Middle Township High School. Of these 120 credits, 85 must be in required courses. Each student is required to complete one year of computer education.

The administrative staff of Middle Township High School includes Mr. David J. Salvo, Principal; Mr. Michael Wilbraham, Vice Principal; and Mrs. Gladys Lauriello, Coordinator of Special Projects. The principal was hired this past summer and this is his first year as the building leader. The coordinator was hired in lieu of the second vice principal until her principal certification is completed and the vice-principal is beginning his second year as an administrator in the high school.

There are 84 teachers in the high school, 44 male and 40 female. There are only six minority teachers. Approximately 29% of the total teaching staff have earned a master's degree and only two staff members possess a doctorate. The number of faculty members allows for a student-teacher ratio of 13:1.

The support staff consists of nine secretaries, one library assistant, one teacher's aide, and five custodians. Middle Township High School has one school nurse and four guidance counselors.

There are 1,044 students enrolled at Middle Township High School. Of the 1,044 enrolled, 542 are male and 502 are female. Approximately 83% of the total student population are Caucasian, 14% are African-American, and 3% represent other races.

Approximately 33% of the school population are from the sending districts of Stone Harbor, Avalon, and Dennis Township.

All Middle Township students are encouraged to take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), but on the average, approximately 150 students take the test. The average verbal score for the 1996-97 school year was 511, and the average math score was 501. These scores reflect a steady increase over the past three years.

On the Eleventh Grade High School Proficiency Test (HSPT11) taken in October of 1997 93% of all juniors tested passed the reading section, 91% passed the mathematics portion, and 94% passed the writing section. In all categories, Middle Township scored above the state average and the average for schools in District Factor Grouping A.

#### Dennis Township Elementary and Middle School

Dennis Township School district operates on a budget just above \$9 million and is also funded by state aid, local taxes and other sources such as federal aid and local district surplus. The current amount of state aid received by this district is just above \$5 million. Again, this figure appears high because of the District Factor Grouping based on the state rating formula. Dennis Township falls within one of the lowest groups of rural districts in the state. Yet, overall, the district spends 7,275,00 per pupil.

The elementary and middle school in Dennis Township is contained within one building. From 1957 to the present, the enrollment has increased from 48 students to just under 900 students. This enrollment includes students who reside in South Seaville, Ocean View, South Dennis, Dennisville, Eldora, Clermont and Belleplain. The town of Woodbine is also within Dennis Township, however, it has its own elementary school at present. The Dennis Township schools are located on 165 Academy road and

Dennisville road. The school has relatively easy access from Route 47 and Main street in Dennisville, NJ.

Dennis Township schools consist of two buildings adjoined by an indoor breezeway. The original structure had one wing, but it has now expanded to four. The first wing houses grades Preschool to Grade three and the cafeteria, the second wing encompasses the writing lab, classrooms and the media center. The third wing contains additional classrooms, the gym, and the distance learning room and the fourth wing includes classrooms for grades four to eight. Presently, the entire school has 47 classrooms, 2 guidance suites, 2 administrative offices, a gym with two teaching stations, and 2 outer offices for secretarial staff. Spacious playground areas are located on the side of the cafeteria and playing fields can be found in the back of the school. Two trailers on the side of the building are used as administrative offices for the Board of Education meetings and the Superintendent's office.

Dennis Township is a small learning community whose purpose is to educate students to develop a respect for the worth and dignity of every human being. The school is committed to the academic, mental, emotional, physical, aesthetic, and social development of all learners so that they may realize the full measure of their roles in the world of work and leisure, and be prepared to lead challenging and productive lives. (Dennis Township Schools Philosophy Statement, 1994).

Dennis Township's curriculum utilizes an eclectic combination of the traditional and more contemporary approaches to education. Once a proponent of the whole language movement, it has now embraced a more integrated approach to learning in the content areas. Students are heterogeneously grouped within designated grades from Pre-

Kindergarten to eighth grade. At-risk students are placed in Basic Skills, Special Education, based on Child Study team recommendation, and a class instructed by Cape May County Special Services staff for elementary level auditory impaired students. Students are not ability grouped; however, some are placed in "pull out" classes based upon their Metropolitan test scores. Basic skills classes are offered for students who fall below the minimum level of proficiency (MLP) and they are taught in small instruction classrooms.

Dennis Township has recently instituted a writing lab with innovative software provided by a technology grant and has offered several teacher work shops via distance learning. The district has invested in a new reading program that has been implemented K-8 with a myriad of lessons that incorporate the team approach to learning across the content areas. A Spanish curriculum has been added to PreK-3<sup>rd</sup> grade to prepare for the state's new GEPA assessment. This was preceded by a new math curriculum that was incorporated into the district last year.

Dennis Township's administrative staff includes Mr. Brian Robinson, the principal at the Pre K through third grade and Mr. James DiCarlo, the vice-principal, for the fourth through the eighth grade levels. Both of these administrators worked together as one team, three years ago, for the entire school body. The Board of Education, based upon the student enrollment, decided that it was more effective to divide the administrators for better management at the elementary and middle school levels.

The support staff consists of four secretaries, one media specialist, eight teacher's aides, and four custodians. In addition, Dennis Township Elementary and Middle school has one nurse and two guidance counselors.

There are 900 students currently enrolled at Dennis Township schools. Of the 900 students, 462 are male and 438 are female. Presently, 96% of these students are Caucasian, 1% are African-American, 1.5 are Hispanic, 1% are Asian and 1% represent other races. Approximately 4% make up the total minority population.

The overview of the community, school districts, staff, and its students provides the foundation on which the internship experience was built. More specifically, the diversity project resulted in interaction with the high school and the elementary schools.

### Importance of the Study

A multicultural education is an essential component provided to students by insightful organizations to students preparing them for life in an ethnically diverse society. If valued and implemented effectively, its cognitive and affective beliefs will be extended to all within the school and far beyond in the community, thereby reaffirming the need for everyone to respect and value our nation's multiethnic contributions.

The educator's role in this process is to provide opportunities for modeling, guiding, and nurturing positive racial, ethnic, and cultural attitudes and perspectives. Students begin to develop an increased understanding of themselves which evolves into meaningful discussions of racial and cultural issues. If the educational goal is to prepare students for participation in democracy, then bringing up the issues of race, class, and gender into the curriculum from K-12 for study and critique is necessary. It is the educational leader's responsibility to continue this commitment by prioritizing diversity through skills audits of staff, developing school strategies for curricular infusion, and identifying emerging diversity issues in the community and develop appropriate programs within the range of school functions. The multicultural programs disseminated

throughout the entire district and the sending districts will culminate in increased sensitivity and awareness of each unique culture and its contributions. This will result in a reduction in racial confrontations and an improved learning climate in the organization.

### Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 presents a Review of the Literature related to achieving diversity in a rural school. Chapter 3 details the Design of the Study, including the development of the research design and the research instruments utilized to obtain data on various aspects of achieving diversity in the rural school. This chapter will also include a description of the sample population, the data collection approach, and the data analysis plan. Chapter 4 will present the Research Findings and Chapter 5 will discuss conclusions, implications, and the need for further study.



## Chapter 2

### Review Of The Literature

Because the United States is a multicultural society, citizens need to understand and respect one another, both as an individual and as members of culturally distinct groups ( Grant & Sleeter, 1989). Culture applies to any group with coherent norms and traditions that help members engage in the world around them. It governs how people share information and knowledge, as well as, how they construct meaning (Oliver, 1992, p. 172). The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (1982) describes multicultural education as "preparation for the social, political, and economic realities " individuals will experience in culturally diverse and complex human encounters...providing a process for individuals to develop competencies for perceiving, evaluating, and behaving in different cultural settings. Yet, multicultural education represents a change in educational thinking in most societies. Historically, state supported schools in the United States began with the attempt to "Americanize" immigrant populations; therefore knowledge of other cultures was seldom figured in school curricula, with the result that students often developed narrow views of the world (Boyer, 1990).

Critics of multicultural education have expressed that it often presents to students a fragmented view of a culture; however more recent supporters believe this view to be shortsighted. More current research reveals that today's supporters of multicultural education would propose a framework from which to shape a curriculum more focused

upon helping students understand how a culture not only shapes, but also, limits their actions. Such understanding permits students to perceive both their own culture and others in a more critical light (Spears et al.1989).

In this sense, multicultural education's ultimate goal is to create an environment in which students can understand, respect, and, ultimately, value cultural diversity.

"Diversity" refers to the quality of being different and unique at an individual or group level. It broadly encompasses individual attributes such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, family, or disabilities. Valuing diversity is to show respect and appreciation for the range of human differences (Spears, 1994).

Research reveals that there are three basic kinds of multicultural education programs and each one has a different focus. Although schools may offer these programs in various formats, the basic types include: (1) Programs Focusing on Information, (2) Programs Focusing on How Students Learn and (3) Programs Focusing on Social Issues. The most common type, the informational program ,teaches about a different culture by adding a few readings to its curriculum and by holding a few in-class celebrations of cultural heroes and holidays. Critics cite the need for more in-depth programs and the inclusion of many more multicultural materials and ideas. Another type of multicultural program addresses how students learn in an effort to raise the school achievement of culturally or linguistically different students. Some of these programs use teaching methods that have been shown to work well with students who have culturally-based learning styles. An example of this may be special math or science programs for minority or female students. The final program that focuses on social issues attempts to improve schooling as well as the cultural and political climate in school. It may try to

raise racial and cultural tolerance or reduce racial tensions. This diverse program emphasizes "human relations" in all forms and utilizes parts of the other two programs. To initiate a reduction of racial tensions, curriculum can emphasize positive social contributions of ethnic and cultural groups by utilizing a variety of teaching methods. These programs share the goal of preparing students to become socially active citizens (Schwartz, 1996).

All of these programs may encourage hiring minority teachers, teaching students how to become more tolerant, and teaching in a way that lets students work together to learn and solve problems i.e., cooperative learning (Schwartz, 1996).

Considering the impact of diversity on the educational environment and the role of the school administrator, schools are now seeking to become more effective by responding to the diverse elements within their various constituencies and tapping into diversity as a source of new ideas for improving student learning, staff professionalism and the whole of school performance. It is important that each school develop its own strategy for working with diversity. The role of the administrative leader is to demonstrate leadership and commitment to managing diversity, merit, & equity policies. This includes establishing the school's commitment, values, and vision in respect to diversity and demonstrating evidence of initiative in diversity management (Locoweed, 1997). In essence, administrators are active supporters of activities, programs, staffing, and curriculum, which address issues of equity.

It is essential to recognize that research supports the idea that children's early experiences are the most powerful in influencing their cultural understanding. Research supports that children develop ideas about racial identity and the attributes of cultural

groups other than their own as early as three years of age ( Banks, 1993). Also significant, children begin their development of self-understanding, including cultural identity, at birth ( Rossi & Rossi, 1990). Two researchers, Hohnsee and Sparks (1989), concur with the concept that children are aware of differences in color, language, gender, and physical ability at a very young age. Kevin Swick confirms the importance of early exposure to multicultural experiences and further cites the classroom as the natural starting point for increasing children's awareness (1995, p.86). Gwendolyn Calvert Baker concurs with Hohnsee in believing that the concept of diversity needs to be instilled in an individual's early life. She maintains that what children learn about other races and cultures eventually determines whether they grow up to respect diversity or become ignorant adults who view differences with hostility and fear (Baker, 1994). Baker feels that young people who have been taught successfully to appreciate diversity grow up to be secure adults with an understanding of other people that goes beyond the superficial attributes of skin color (Baker, 1994). . Additionally, numerous research studies conclude that children learn by observing the "spoken and unspoken" messages about these differences; consequently anti-bias experiences seek to nurture every child's fullest potential by actively addressing the issues of diversity and equity in the classroom and school environment (Hohensee, 1989).

Multicultural education in rural schools merits attention for several reasons. According to B.J. McNamara, the character of rural life is changing, influenced heavily by economic, technological, and demographic adjustments, which, in turn, has led to the need for the school to look outside rather than inside for answers to human meaning

(1984, p.8). Second, after its founding, the United States welcomed the immigration of many people to the country. Finally, recent demographic trends are rapidly increasing the cultural and ethnic diversity of American society (Deaton, 1984). Rural counties are among the least ethnically diverse communities and are identified as homogeneous towns that need to import diversity, creating structures to explore how cultures exist. Aram Ayalon's (1989) research confirms this position by asserting that rural white residents tend to view education about minority groups as irrelevant to their community. Population trends indicate that there is increasing growth in rural areas and rural schools could become instrumental in improving student preparation for changing economic and social realities. Multicultural education could become instrumental in rural school reform by sparking examination of teaching strategies, curriculum, staffing, and school organization, and by addressing respect for cultural and ethnic diversity (Oliver & Howley, 1993).

Similar to Baker's viewpoint, Kathleen Crowley-Long feels that it is essential that instructors in all white environments make every effort to include ongoing discussions of diversity in their classrooms. She believes that racially monolithic environments tend to foster stereotypical thinking, bias, and ingroup/outgroup perceptions; therefore it is imperative that schools of limited diversity become sensitive to the lives and experiences of people of color. Crowley further maintains that without an adequate understanding of issues of race, students may continue to foster incorrect or biased evaluations of others (1995, p.134).

The purposes of multicultural education are compelling; however only when rural schools can apply them to their own circumstances do they truly seem valuable. Two

researchers, Oliver and Craig, suggest that three considerations bear on making multicultural education work in rural schools. These three elements include: (1) reducing cultural isolation, (2)-adapting practice to accommodate local needs, and (3) the nature of the outcomes. Researchers have determined that rural students who engage in examination of their own cultures are more apt to understand the meaning of another culture.

More specifically, multicultural understanding helps students to overcome the cultural isolation that the lack of ethnic diversity in rural areas may impose (Oliver, 1992). Research reveals that giving children opportunities to interact with peers from diverse backgrounds helps them to learn the differences and similarities in our cultures through the bond of friendship.

School practices designed to address diversity according to Spears and colleagues (1990) suggest that attention to mission, staffing, curriculum, instruction, home and community linkages, and extracurricular activities is crucial for success. Schools with educational missions give educators stronger motivation and provide parents with a clearer picture of what the school values. The school mission should concentrate on key areas of high quality student learning, but it can also concentrate on establishing a vision that can incorporate values and goals related to equity and justice, respect and appreciation for multiculturalism and diversity, and concern for the academic success of all students (Betances, 1992).

Discourse about culturally responsive or culturally relevant curriculum has been the latest "buzz word" within the context of debate about the validity and shape of a multicultural approach to public education. A more widely held belief is that an inclusive

curriculum can help promote intergroup harmony and reduce conflict between ethnic groups. In addition, culturally responsive schools exhibit the following traits: (1) the curriculum content is inclusive and reflects the cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity of society and the world (2) instructional practices and assessment build on the students' prior knowledge, culture, and language (3) classroom practices stimulate students to construct knowledge, make meaning, and examine cultural biases and assumptions (4) schoolwide beliefs and practices foster understanding and respect for cultural diversity, and celebrate the contributions of diverse groups and (5) school programs and instructional practices draw from and integrate family and community to support the students' academic success ( Heller & Hawkins, 1994). In accordance with these beliefs, many educators believe that a culturally relevant curriculum , CRC, benefits all students (Series Looks, 1993). It also directly correlates with Goal Three of the original National Education Goals, which has as one of its objectives ,increasing the level of knowledge of students about the country's diverse cultural heritage (Gronlund, 1993).

One such prominent program recognized as a "promising practice" by President Clinton's "Initiative on Race: One America in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" was the *Building Cultural Bridges* curriculum which used a student-based approach to solving a community problem. Student leaders from the area high schools and 32 other high schools in South Carolina participated in a summer workshop designed to establish and implement a goal of promoting increased racial awareness and tolerance among the local high school students. In addition, 12 area high schools implemented a pilot curriculum that contained over 50 diversity activities for classroom use, as well as, lesson plans, readings, handouts, 78 diversity school projects, and an exhaustive list of diversity

organizations and resources. Currently, over 41 states have begun to use this new curriculum and the students on the Students Unity Task Force in South Carolina are eager about the introduction of the new element into their education (Ross, 1998).

Spears' research (1990) revealed a number of successful strategies used by rural schools to increase the ethnic diversity of their staffs. Programs like "Teach for America" provided opportunities for ethnically diverse staff members as resource teachers to visit remote rural areas; however when a particular strategy was not possible, often white teachers visited multi-ethnic schools or took part in workshops about cultural diversity. In addition, extracurricular activities were planned for teachers and students including field trips to museums and cultural festivals or inviting ethnic clubs or speakers to address students.

An element that proved to be beneficial to implementing multicultural programs is cultivating links between home and school to enlist parental support. Joint efforts by parents and teachers are the natural starting point for building a family-school program. Enlisting parents' help in identifying appropriate and meaningful goals and activities for family involvement in multicultural education is a first step. Parents can participate in establishing multicultural guidelines for curriculum and they can also be a powerful source for sharing cultural items, family recipes, experiences, or stories (Swick & Graves, 1995). Byrnes (1992) concurs with the importance of parental involvement with similar strategies and further asserts that children look to their parents or guardians for examples of how to relate to people who are different from themselves; therefore parents need positive support for their efforts to function as a multicultural role model. For example, another increasing avenue of promoting parental involvement and diversity is



the use of technology; more specifically, the Internet is often used to announce opportunities for parents of high school students to participate in their schools by sharing aspects of their culture. One school generated a school newspaper via the Internet and included a section titled, "The Principal's Corner" which reflected upon the Principal's effort to recognize and incorporate ideas from diverse cultures. The Internet, recently, through state and regional education networks and commercial providers, offer resources and communications that are increasingly available to administrators, school media specialists, and classroom teachers (Morgan, 1997).

Another crucial element to multiculturalism in school programs is the need to assess teacher attitudes toward teaching culturally diverse topics. West Virginia ranks as the second most rural state in the nation; yet its culture is becoming increasingly pluralistic. This particular study revealed that students were experiencing difficulties relating to the middle class values and perceptions of their teacher. The study, involving a 64 percent rural student population in West Virginia, addressed the need to assess teacher attitudes and provide them with teacher training designed to create an effective learning environment and develop special programs to encourage acceptance of cultural diversity by both teachers and students (Dooley, 1994, p.7).

Swick (1992) cites a variety of activities and resources that can enhance children's multicultural learning. Good children's literature set in various places and situations support the development of multicultural perspectives can be used as a basis for classroom discussion (Bout & McCormick, 1992). Then, relating the literature to concrete activities such as performing drama or making artifacts is essential. Neugebauer (1992) suggests involving parents, grandparents, or neighbors to tell stories about their

culture and struggles to achieve respect in their communities. The use of videotapes, accompanied by a companion book, may provide a means for enhancing children's cultural understandings. Finally, teachers may use visits to local restaurants, museums, workplaces, churches, and government facilities to offer beginning points for learning about diversity ( Oliver & Penny, 1992).

According to Spears (1990), the specific outcomes evidenced by the implementation of multicultural education in rural schools do reflect that participants felt that the programs made school seem more relevant which led to, they believed, a decrease in the rates of students dropping out. Tomlinson (1990), who introduced multicultural reforms in British schools, reports more egalitarian and sensitive attitudes as evidence of the value of multicultural education.

The implementation of multicultural education did make a difference to participants either symbolically or personally and the successes of the programs led to an increased awareness of diversity and multicultural reform. Due in part to the continuing debate over how to define multicultural education--why it should be and for whom it is intended-- little has been written about "hard" outcomes (Oliver & Howley,1992). Yet, Spears (1990) reported a decrease in racial stereotyping and an increase in better relationships among students as well as a reduction in the drop out rates.

Rural communities are now facing a cultural crisis (Berry,1990). Stern (1992) cites rural citizens leaving their small towns or outmigration, profound restructuring of the rural economy, and the increase in rural poverty as influential factors that contribute to the crisis. Multicultural education can help individuals and communities value and preserve their own unique cultural contributions. It can also offer a relevant view in an

increasingly complex world ( Oliver & Howley, 1992). Outmigration, profound restructuring of the rural economy, and the increase in rural poverty add to this crisis (Nash, 1974). These conditions offer different, but equally compelling rationales for the implementation of multicultural education.

Diverse communities need to acknowledge their cultural wealth, creating community structures that respect differences and build on the strengths of each culture while homogeneous communities need to import diversity, creating structures to explore how to function within cultures that are different than their own (Spears, 1994). Yet, research does indicate that rural at-risk students are quite different from their urban and suburban counterparts. Rural schools have a lower high school dropout rate; however a higher percentage of students who do not attend post secondary school. The lack of vocational schools often results in students who experience a less than successful adult life, and a higher risk of extreme isolation, a lack of cultural diversity, and lower student aspirations. Additionally, rural schools could become instrumental in improving rural economies, but have been criticized as being inadequate in preparing students for changing economic and social realities.

These findings suggest that programs should be specifically targeted for the rural communities, and there is certainly a need for flexibility in the policy responses to rural needs . Multicultural education can help individuals and communities value and preserve their own cultural uniqueness. It can also serve the same function more generally, so that our multicultural society values and persevere itself (Oliver & Penny, 1992). Sleeter (1992) believes that multicultural education is not a quick fix; however it does provide a map from which to chart the future, and it is instrumental in assisting educators and

communities to challenge arrangements that reproduce inequities.

## Chapter 3

### The Design Of The Study

#### Research Design

This study addressed Middle Township's administrative concerns regarding the lack of diversity in one of the high school's rural elementary sending districts. It was felt that this might have been a determining factor for increasing racial conflicts at the high school level. A diversity component was introduced in the elementary school to increase student awareness and appreciation for racial and cultural differences. Utilizing data from the survey instrument with items addressing student attitudes towards differences in others, information gathered will be shared with both districts' school based committees. The results generated will be utilized to support programs, policies and practices that embrace diversity.

Multicultural education is basic. To teach students without it is parallel to sending them into the world unprepared. Responses from 117 surveys were analyzed to assess student's attitudes toward multicultural knowledge and programs measured by concrete attitudinal results, which were interpreted preceding, and subsequent to the multicultural programs. Conclusions regarding the importance of district multicultural needs will be drawn with elaboration upon its implications for the total school environment.

#### Development and Design of Research Instruments

Initially, the research proposal was designed to examine attitudinal responses on

the second, fourth, sixth and eighth grades in Dennis Township school district. After interviewing both principals, Pre- kindergarten to third grade and fourth to eighth grades, it became evident that both schools functioned as totally different entities.

Research by Banks (1993) revealed that early cultural experiences of children are more influential; therefore, the first grade students were selected as respondents to reflect a representative population of the Dennis Township elementary school.

The research proposal examined two areas focus within the study. The major areas included increasing multicultural awareness and developing an appreciation for diversity in a rural elementary school.

The first survey consisted of ten questions generated by the intern in a sequential manner designed to measure student attitudes towards various scenarios in the elementary school.

The intern shared the survey with the co-intern who expressed concern regarding the appropriateness of the vocabulary level for the elementary students. A meeting was set up by the intern with a district elementary teacher to review the survey and its verbiage. Revisions were made to the survey for increased student comprehension and the next challenge was to find a Likert scale graphic to align with student attitudes. Inquiries were made at Rowan University seminar practicum class and telephone calls were made to the district's elementary schools for appropriate graphics that could be utilized on an elementary level survey. Several models emerged including one utilizing different "smiley faces" which was extracted from a Reading Inventory. The intern finally selected an appropriate graphic and submitted the survey to the mentor. She made suggestions, but expressed satisfaction with the content.

The approved initial research level instrument can best be described as an

attitudinal survey with major points focusing on student feelings towards learning about different cultures and holidays, befriending students from other races and feeling comfortable working with students from diverse cultural backgrounds in the school setting inventory (See Appendix A). The pre-test survey utilized a Likert Scale ranging from "Never" to "Often" which indicated the intensity of the student's feelings toward the statement (See Appendix A).

The intern generated the post- survey in a similar manner designed to reflect attitudinal changes in students after exposure to the multicultural programs as well as interest towards continuation of the programs. The post-survey contained an open comment section to elicit student responses regarding their favorite multicultural activity or program.

The approved pre-test and post-test research instrument included the student selection of graphics which reflected their feelings toward statements and the post-test survey provided an opportunity for students to write about particular activities. Both survey instruments were one two-sided page, with clear, concise and straightforward items sensitive to the attention span of elementary students (See Appendix A).

The survey instruments reported student attitudes toward multicultural appreciation in a descriptive and comprehensive manner, which resulted in increased awareness of multicultural education and experiences as necessary and integral component of the school.

#### Description of the Sample

The sample for the research study included 112 first grade students at Dennis Township Elementary School. The total student population figure was 65 females and 52

males. The ethnic makeup of the sample population included 111 white students and one African American student. The original project proposal included measurement of teachers and students from grades kindergarten to eighth grade; however, as previously mentioned, research revealed the effects of multiculturalism upon younger students is far more influential. With the selection of the research instrument, the upper grade students were eliminated from the total sample measured; yet, they still received exposure to elements of the projects.

Based upon the district's historical perception of racial intolerance and the lack of familiarity by the intern with educators in the school, requests for participating in the project had to be conducted with sensitivity to the majority of the administrators and teachers who may not be receptive to the infusion of multiculturalism. Yet, with the increase in housing development in this rural area, an influx of middle-class and minority students had created a need for the educators to address the diversity issues.

#### Data Collection Approach and Analysis Plan

Participants in the study were given one week to complete and return the pre-test and post-test surveys. Most of the surveys were returned by the deadline and several others were sent to the high school within the next three days. The survey asked for student responses to ten questions focusing on attitudes toward differences in others. Responses to the statements should have taken approximately twenty minutes to complete. Although the statements were not lengthy, time had to be allotted for teacher explanation of the survey questions as needed. In addition, the survey directions asked students to circle or color responses in which case, some students elected to color the graphics and this added to the time allotted for completion.



Approximately 76 of the pre-test surveys were returned, representing a 68% return and 82 of the post-test surveys representing 74% of the sample student population. Item responses one and two yielded information regarding student receptivity to learning about cultural backgrounds. Items three and four revealed student responses to degrees of comfort in a mixed racial school environment and classroom settings. Items five, six and seven provided a profile of the major focus of the study revealing that exposure and representation of diversity led to an increased level of comfort with differences in others. Item eight connected the present experiences of students to the desire to explore other cultural experiences. Although survey question nine which focused upon the ethnic background of the teacher may have seemed irrelevant, it had a deep impact upon personnel when considering multiethnic exposure for all students. Finally, item ten yielded responses that reflected the overall change in view of the students' tolerance to diversity before and after the project. This item exposed any attitudinal changes experienced by the students, which could be attributed to the project exposure. An open ended section was added to the post-test to allow students to comment on cultural programs that they enjoyed and those that they might enjoy seeing again during the next school year.

After examining student attitudes toward diversity and multiculturalism, a conscious decision can be made to address diversity as an integral component of learning or maintain its present environment which presently does not prepare the students for immersion in a diversified student population on the high school level. The research instrument and final recommendations will allow the educational organization to examine the dire need for multicultural programs, experiences, and curriculum in order to address

the need for student respect towards cultural and ethnic diversity.

## Chapter Four

### Presentation of the Research Findings

Current educational research revealed that the ultimate goal of multicultural programs is to create an environment in which students understand, respect, and value cultural diversity. Research also supports that the earliest exposure to multicultural experiences is the most beneficial for children. The study conducted at Dennis Township Elementary yielded extremely significant data, all of which relate to the major goal of the research project: to increase multicultural awareness in a rural school with limited diversity.

The results of the pre-test survey and the post-test survey revealed a significant change in the participants' attitudes, preceding and subsequent to, the multicultural exposure which indicated a higher level of acceptance by the first grade students toward diversity. The participants responded to ten statements which focused upon diversity in the interpersonal and intrapersonal realm as well as their receptiveness to learning about diversity in school. Directed statements from the pre-test and the post-test surveys created by the intern can be appropriately clustered by the following areas of focus: *interpersonal, intrapersonal and receptivity to learning*. All of the student responses were totaled and averaged to depict an assessment of change in student attitudes preceding and following the multicultural exposure. Specific representative survey items were examined to present a clear reflection of shifts in student attitudes preceding and following the multicultural project.

The student responses to the interpersonal survey items included the following statements (See Appendix A):

1. *I enjoy meeting new friends.*
3. *I would enjoy a friendship with a person who looked different than me.*
10. *I think that we should try to get to know someone even if they look different than we do.*

The above survey items focused upon students' attitudes towards the choice pertaining to interacting with someone of a different race or ethnic background. They revealed in simple terms whether the students felt that it was acceptable to have friends from a different culture. An open attitude toward the acquisition of friends in general is needed to evolve to accepting someone who looks different. In addition, it elicited student opinion toward attempting to become involved with a person of a different ethnic background if given the opportunity.

Information garnered from Table 1 and 2 showed significant growth in student attitudes from the pre-test surveys to the post-test surveys. Based upon Table 1, the pre-test results revealed that approximately three percent or 2 of the 76 students felt that they would "never" enjoy meeting new friends; however, in the post-survey four percent or 3 felt this way. This indicated a small increase after the multicultural programs. In response to the same item and during the pre-test survey, 18% or 14 respondents felt that they "sometimes" enjoyed meeting new friends as compared to the five percent or four respondents who chose this response during the post-test results. As also indicated in Table 1 and 2, the majority of the students during the pre-test and post-test surveys

responded that they "often" enjoyed meeting new friends. At least 60 participants or 79% selected this response during the pre-test results as compared to 75 students or 91% who chose "often" during the post-test survey; again indicating a 19% increase after the multicultural program exposure.

**Table 1 -First Grade - Diversity Survey Results Pretest - 76 Students**

Survey Item #	N-Never	S-Sometimes	O-Often
# 1.	2	14	60
# 2.	1	19	56
# 3.	10	40	26
# 4.	7	29	40
# 5.	4	16	56
# 6.	5	23	48
# 7.	4	18	54
# 8.	3	19	53
# 9.	10	29	37
# 10.	1	11	64

**Table 2-Post Test Results - 82 Students**

Survey Item #	N- Never	S- Sometimes	O-Often
# 1.	3	4	75
# 2.	0	4	78
# 3.	0	4	78
# 4.	3	19	60
# 5.	2	6	74
# 6.	1	12	69
# 7.	3	14	65
# 8.	2	5	75
# 9.	2	3	77
# 10.	2	8	72

Also within the interpersonal realm, the students' attitudes towards selecting a friend who looks different than they do also reflected growth after the program exposure based upon the pre-test and the post- test results.

An examination of Table 1 revealed that approximately ten percent of the students or thirteen participants felt that they would "never" choose a friend from a different ethnic background; however, as shown in Table 2, this number sharply decreased to zero students who felt this way during the post-test results. While examining the same survey item during the pre-test survey, 40 students or 53% indicated that they would "sometimes" select a friend who looked different, yet, following the multicultural activities, only four students or five percent selected the same response. According to Table 1 and pre-test results, 26 students or 34% of the participants indicated that they would "often" select a friend who looked different from them as compared to Table 2 or the post-survey results when 78 students or 95% now felt that they would "often" choose a different looking friend. Once again, there was a large increase in student attitudes that shifted from a negative response to feeling positive about choosing a friend who might be from a different racial background.

The final survey item that fell within the interpersonal category focused upon whether a student should get to know someone who looks different from them. As indicated in Table 1, only one student or one percent of the students responded "never" to this statement which increased to two students or two percent in Table 2. Each pre-test and post-test revealed an extremely small number of students who gave a negative response to this statement. Once again, examining this item in Table 1, only eleven students or 14% expressed that they "sometimes" feel they should get to know others who are different, however, after the program exposure, nine students or 11% agreed that it

was acceptable occasionally. The remaining 64 participants or 84% of the students during the pre-test survey expressed that they should "often" get to know different kinds of people and this number increased after the multicultural programs to 87 participants or 88% who agreed with this stance. The data from both tables showed an increase in students who felt that it is important to get to know someone who may look different or who is from another ethnic background.

The results indicated that the frequent opportunities to interact with the multiethnic students during the program increased the exposure to minority students and added to the level of comfort for the students.

The next group of survey items, classified as intrapersonal, wherein respondents were required to react to statements that indicated their attitudes toward participating in classroom activities with students from different racial backgrounds. The survey items included (see Appendix A):

4. *.I think that I would enjoy being in a class with different kinds of classmates.*
5. *My teacher talks about getting with others from different races.*
6. *I would enjoy being on a team with a student(s) from different races.*
9. *I would not mind if my teacher was a different color than I am.*

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, the results from the pre-test and the post-test statements within the intrapersonal category varied greatly as the issue of relationships within a classroom setting is approached.

When the participants were asked to select a response based upon how they would

feel in a classroom with multiethnic students, there were a variety of responses, which later reflected a significant change after the programs were implemented. As is shown in Table 1 and during the pre-test, seven students or nine percent felt that they would "never" like this arrangement, however, Table 2 and the post-test revealed that only three students or four percent of the participants still felt this way after the participation in the multicultural activities. A midsection of the participants during the pre-test results, 29 students or 38%, felt that they would "sometimes" feel comfortable with a different ethnic makeup in their classrooms. This changed very little in the post-test results as 19 students or 23% still felt that this is sometimes acceptable to them. The largest section of participants continued to feel that it was acceptable to be a part of a multiracial classroom. The pre-test results revealed that 40 students or 53% felt they would "often" enjoy the diversity in the classroom and the post-test results increased to 60 students or 73% of the participants who were receptive to interacting with different races of students in the classroom setting. Although there was only a limited time with the minority students, the participants expressed the desire to have a greater cross section of ethnic students within the classroom. This reinforced the positive role of the exposure to diversity after the limited time span that the students had the opportunity to interact.

Prior research revealed that the teacher's attitude as well as the parent's attitude is an influential factor when impressing upon students the need to be accepting of differences in others. One survey item within the intrapersonal category asked students to respond to whether their teacher talks about getting along with others regardless of their



differences. As revealed in Table 1 results, four students or five percent of them felt that they "never" did this, sixteen students or 21% of the participants expressed that they "sometimes" discussed it, and 56 students or 74% indicated that they did "often" did talk about respecting differences in others. As shown in Table 2 results and post-test results, the programs may have initiated conversations about diversity since only two students or 2% indicated that teachers never discussed the issue, six students or seven percent indicated that they sometimes talked about it and 74 students or 90% felt that it was often discussed in class. According to the participants, the issue of diversity had been discussed more frequently and the increase shown in the post-test results suggested that the multicultural activities had spurred teacher and student discussions of ethnic achievements or contributions.

As revealed in Table 1 pre-test results, five students or six percent of the participants felt that they would "never" enjoy being on a team with students from different races; however, as shown in Table 2, post-test results, this number decreased to one student who still felt this way after the multicultural programs. A larger segment of the students during the pre-test survey, 23 students or 30 percent of the participants, felt that they would "sometimes" enjoy the team activities, but the number of students who chose this response dropped to 12 students or 15 percent of the participants who still felt this way after viewing the multicultural programs. Once again, the largest faction of students during the pre-test survey expressed approval of teaming with multiethnic students evidenced by 48 students or 63% of the participants who chose "often" in response to

this statement. After the series of multicultural programs, the number of students who selected this response rose to 69 students or 84% of the participants in the study. Many of the students had been exposed to mini lessons with the minority students. In addition, several activities included cooperative assignments and students worked in a group with the minority student from the high school. The results shown in Table 2 to this survey item reflected the increased level of comfort that the students felt after the opportunity to work on a team with minority students.

One intrapersonal survey item asked students to respond to how they felt about having a teacher of different race. As is indicated in Table 1, the pre-test scores revealed that ten students or 13% expressed that they would not feel comfortable with a teacher that was not of their race. A larger segment felt undecided as 29 students or 38.1 % expressed that it may "sometimes" be acceptable to them. A clear midsection, 37 students or 48.6% felt that they would "often" enjoy a teacher of another race. After viewing and participating in the multicultural activities, Table 2 revealed that several students had reconsidered this prospect. The post-test results, after the infusion of multicultural programs, included only two students or 2.4% who still chose "never" and three or 3.6% who chose "sometimes" and, amazingly, 77 of the students or 93.9% felt that they would "often" enjoy a teacher with a different racial background.

Perhaps the most important component of teaching diversity is the student receptivity to learning about those of different races. In the absence of multicultural

programs, the motivating force for learning about different cultures may spring from textbooks, news events or student curiosity. The following survey items addressed the desire to learn about other cultures (See Appendix A).

1. *I enjoy reading stories with characters that are of different races.*
2. *I would enjoy learning about cultural holidays.*

As shown in Tables 1 and 2, the survey results from this cluster showed less of a change between pre-test and post-test results. Students responded to whether they enjoyed reading stories with different races of people in them. Approximately 54 students or 71% of the students responded "often" to this statement during the pre-test and this increased to 65 students or 79% during the post-test results who chose this response after the multicultural programs had been presented. The pre-test results revealed that a small number of participants which included four students or 5% felt that they did not like the multiethnic content in class material along with 18 students or 24% who expressed that they "sometimes" enjoyed it. These numbers decreased only slightly during the post-test results as three students or 4% of the participants continued not to enjoy the ethnic influence in class materials and 14 students or 17% still felt they occasionally enjoyed it. The results showed that the majority of the students already were receptive to diversity in content subjects and this may be attributed to the increased exposure to multiculturalism in texts and the curriculum. This reveals that the majority of students were receptive to learning and reading about the wide spectrum of ethnic groups that exist in our country.

The final survey items focused on the receptiveness to learning about diversity and they included statements that addressed how students felt about exploring other holidays celebrated by different cultures. Based upon Table 1 results, 53 students or 70% of the participants felt that they "often" enjoyed lessons about other cultures, while 19 students or 25% expressed that they "sometimes" enjoyed learning about other cultures and four students or 5% indicated that they "never" liked it. As shown in Table 2, the post-test results mirrored that majority of these students, approximately 75 or 92% of the participants, expressed a positive attitude towards learning about other cultures.

Along with quantitative data gathered from this study, qualitative information was garnered to depict an accurate assessment of the student growth between the pre-test and post-test attitudes. While examining the student attitudes toward initiating a friendship with children from different races, a larger segment felt positively about taking the first step towards after viewing or participating with multiethnic students during classroom activities. As is shown in the interpersonal survey chart, the number of students who changed their responses after the multicultural programs reflected a decrease in the "never" and "sometimes" responses and indicated a significant increase in students who chose that they would now "often" pursue friendships with students from a different ethnicity (See Chart 3).

Data from the intrapersonal survey items is more clearly shown on the chart, which reflected that student attitudes toward participating in group or collaborative

activities grew favorably and students recognized the importance of working alongside children of different races. Most students regarded the multicultural experiences as positive ones that they looked forward to viewing again. Interestingly, the pre-test survey scores showed the greatest reluctance of student attitudes when accepting a student from a different race within a group or a team; however, these items also reflected an increase suggesting that more acceptance toward diversity was gathered after the exposure to the various multicultural activities, programs and presentations (See Chart 4).

The charted survey items that addressed learning about diversity also indicated an overall increase in positive discussions after the multiethnic programs. Student interest in other cultures and issues raised by teachers regarding the achievements of minorities generated discussions about race and equity (See Chart 4). The multicultural programs seemed to generate more teacher and student talks in classrooms, which resulted in increased positive responses to the survey statements from students, and was reflected on the post surveys. Results from the post survey indicated that teachers discussed minority achievements more frequently; thereby, allowing students the opportunity to express dialogues about diversity and develop the implicit need to respect and appreciate the differences in others as they encountered students from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (See Chart 4).

Viewing a minority teacher in a leadership role throughout the entire program raised the level of comfort for most of the students and the post test survey results clearly

reflected that a large segment of students would often enjoy having teachers that were of a different race. Overall, the elementary school was eager to build stronger ties to better race relations and exposure, which set a perfect atmosphere for interacting in multicultural group activities or classroom projects.

In an open response section of the survey, the students were asked to tell what programs they enjoyed and cite information that they learned from the multicultural programs (See Appendix B.). A large segment enjoyed the Kwanzaa celebration because of its increased television exposure and the "hands on" activity that accompanied this distance learning project. Many students expressed that they liked the colorful costumes. All categories addressed by the survey indicated increased appreciation of diversity by the students in some way, after the majority of the students were exposed to the multicultural programs through out the six-month period.

CHART I - PRE-TEST ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ABOUT DIVERSITY

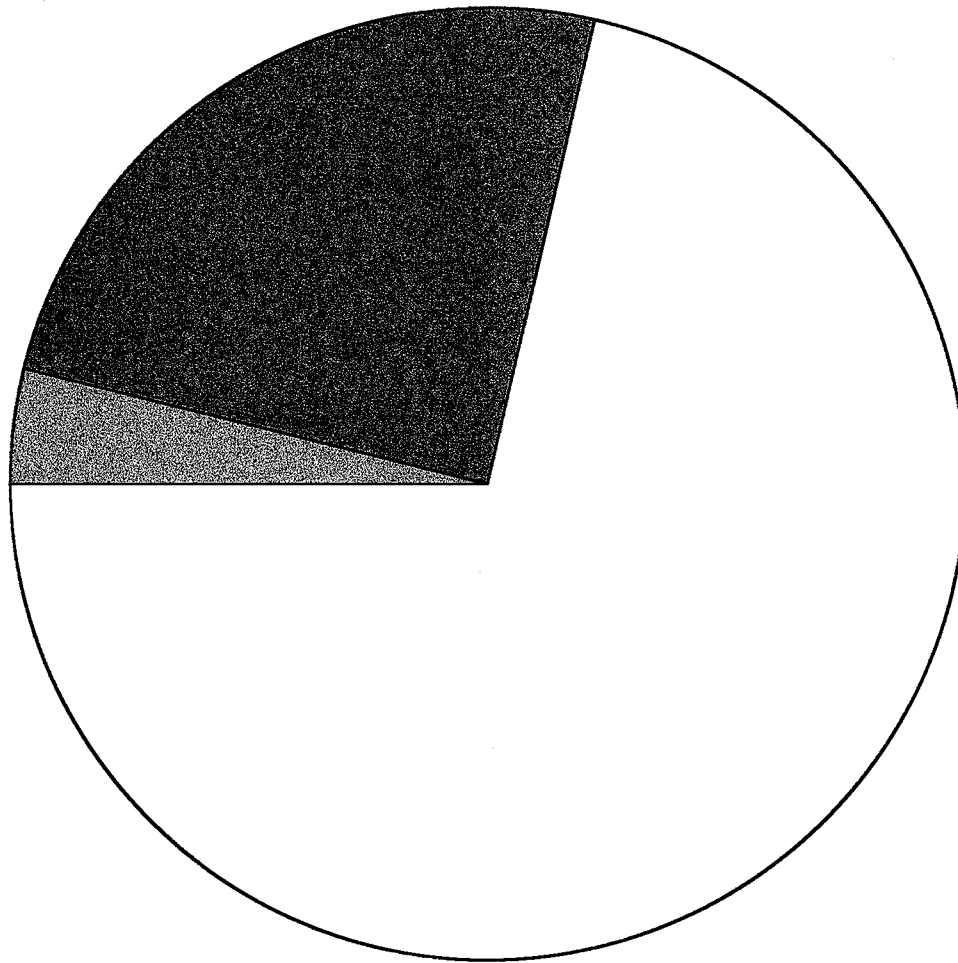


CHART II - POST-TEST ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ABOUT DIVERSITY

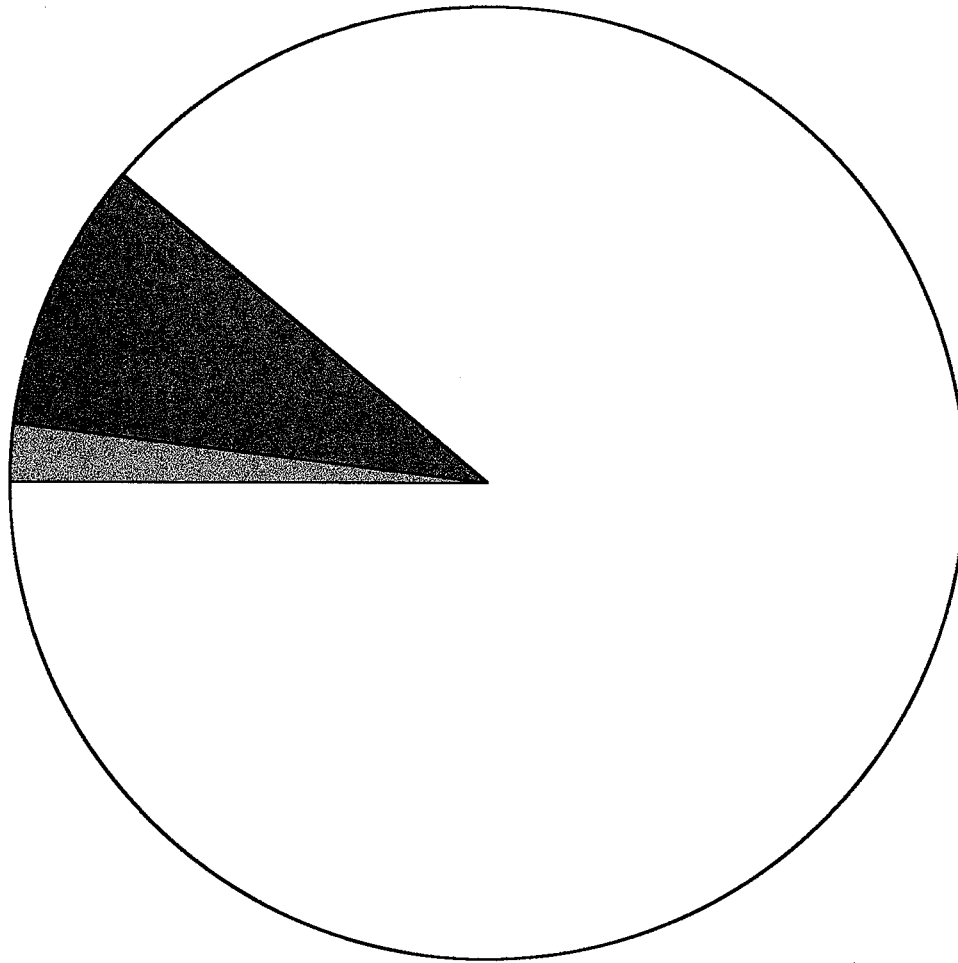
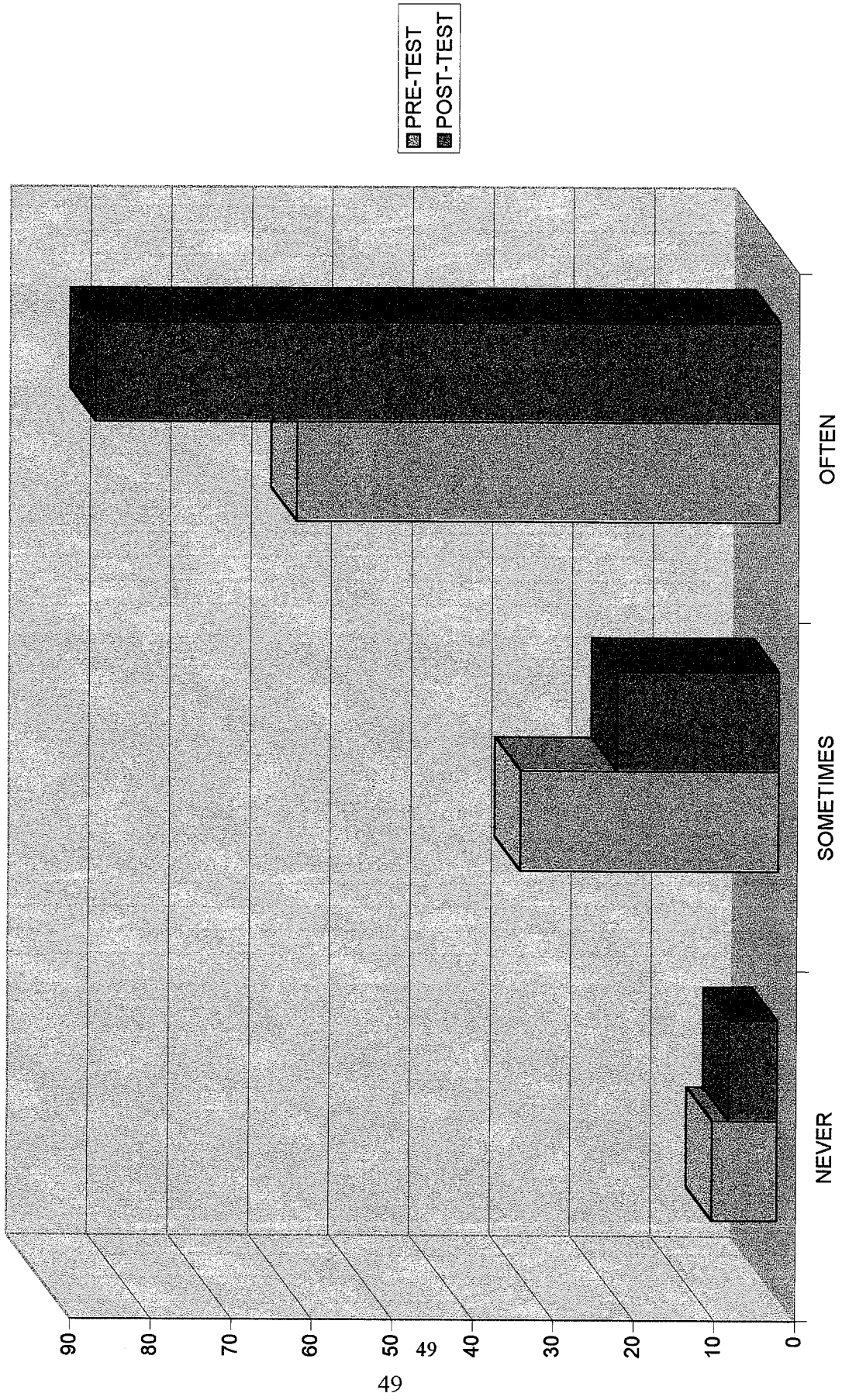
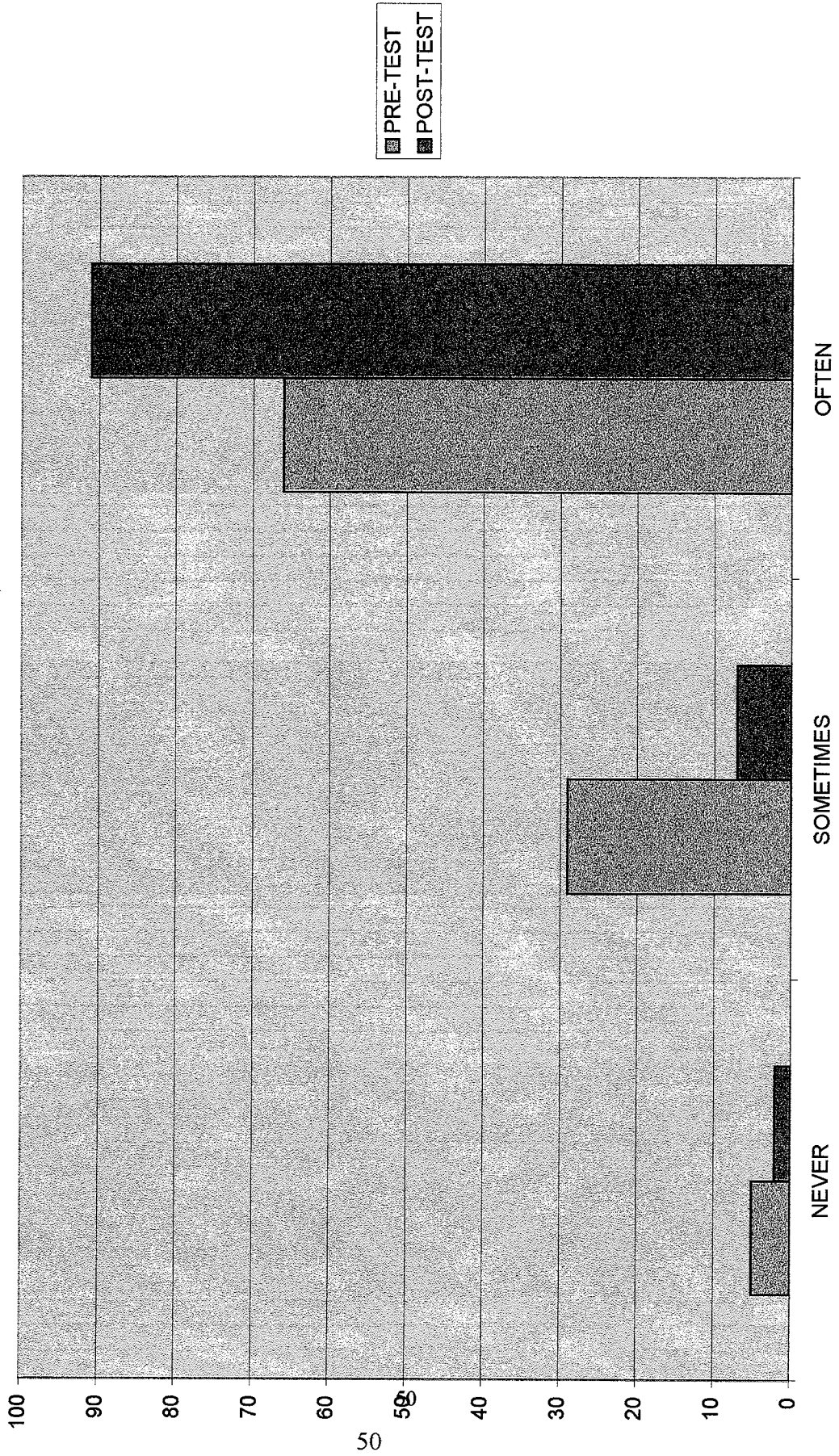




CHART IV - INTRAPERSONAL SURVEY ITEMS #4,5,6 & 9



**CHART III - INTERPERSONAL SURVEY ITEMS #1,3 & 10 -  
AVERAGE RESPONSES**



## Chapter Five

### Conclusions, Implications, And Further Study

The major conclusions that were drawn from the infusion of multicultural activities and the analysis of the study results on first grade students at Dennis Township Elementary school can be best represented through the key responses to the survey statements. It is within the reversal of student attitudes toward specific statements which address diversity that reveals the areas of strengths and weaknesses that the educational organization should be focused upon in developing an improvement plan for increased multicultural exposure.

After the diversity program exposure and student participation in activities with minority students, the post-test results indicated that a large number of the students had changed their opinions towards the choice of selecting of friends from a different ethnic background. Thereby concluding that there should be continued concentrated efforts to increase the opportunities for the elementary students to interact with minority students from nearby districts in a variety of classroom or distance learning activities.

Student attitude toward learning about diversity and multicultural customs as revealed in the pre-test and post-test survey remained positive throughout the multicultural exposure suggesting that the younger students gained a more receptive

attitude toward recognizing, appreciating and studying the different cultures in society. For example, a fairly large percentage of students enjoyed learning and participating in customs such as Kwanzaa as indicated in the post- survey's open-end response. It was chosen by the participants as one of the best multicultural activities presented to the classes.

Continued efforts to develop this multicultural understanding will help students gain a broader understanding of culture that the future will most certainly require. In addition, most current textbooks and curriculums have attempted to address issues of diversity in their content material. This suggests that the school district should use this classroom exposure as a catalyst to develop more projects that would involve students from different ethnic backgrounds in shared distant learning projects with same grade level classes from a more diversified elementary school in the county. Early experiences that involve the students of Dennis Township and Middle Township engaging in team building and consulting with students will help the rural school to develop more tolerance and understanding.

Perhaps the most important conclusion of the entire study can be derived from the survey results' increase in positive student responses toward the appreciation of another culture's customs. This may be an opportunity to expand the cultural experiences of the students by making field trips to museums, inviting more speakers and hosting exchange students. Fortunately, the faculty and staff at Dennis Township Elementary school were concerned professionals who generally recognized that the lack of diversity and multicultural experiences hindered many of the students as they entered the more diverse high school.

In addition, educators were quite cognizant of the changing neighborhoods as an increased number of families were moving to their district and requesting more exposure to diversity in the school setting. This might be expanded upon by enlisting parental support in appreciating diversity. The school might consider conducting family workshops that addresses cultural diversity. The first grade students also enjoyed the larger presentations such as the Hispanic Culture club who presented a myriad of Spanish dancers and the Tuskegee Airmen presentation. These are cultural events that the parents may enjoy planning with the school.

A cumulative conclusion can be drawn from the comparative survey data and the presentation of the multicultural program. The majority of the first grade students of Dennis Township Elementary School were more open and receptive to accepting differences in others and their customs after project exposure. Although many of the elementary students had not had the opportunities to interact with students of color, they had little inhibitions after the first presentation of the multicultural programs. It is to the credit of the educators and the former principal of Dennis Township that the surface understanding of diversity had been addressed within the school demonstrated by student knowledge of many of the key African-American heroes in history.

Yet, continued multicultural exposure and experiences in the elementary school should improve intergroup relations as these youngsters reach the secondary level. With increased opportunities to interact with minorities, students from Dennis Township elementary school will feel less alienated when they reach the high school. As teachers expose them to positive portrayals of minorities, including educational approaches that combat stereotypes and racial hatreds, the students will be more likely to recognize the

common values that they share. A concentrated effort should be made to bring diversity to the staff of the school, which is difficult in an isolated area such as this. If this is not possible, white teachers might consider visiting multi-ethnic schools or participating in workshops about cultural diversity.

The intern's leadership development was greatly enhanced by the administration of the programs and the study along with the analysis and comparison of the data. For example, the intern used unique interpersonal skills, written and verbal, organizational skills, coordinating and communicating, as well as decision-making skills to implement the diversity project. The intern concluded that continual attempts to implement opportunities for multicultural activities using the surrounding communities including the high school minority students as well as the neighboring district's more diversified elementary level students is essential. This will result in improved student attitudes toward diversity at an early age and throughout their junior high school years culminating into a smoother transition in the diversified high school environment. It will be necessary for the new educational leader of the district to review the study's results as well as gain an understanding of the district's history in regards to the racial attitudes of the students.

Further implementation of a successful program that addresses multiculturalism in this rural school should extend beyond student activities and reach into the realm of hiring minority educators. This would truly reflect that this district has made every attempt to reveal to their students and the community at large that diversity is a valued component in the school organization.

Finally, the study and infusion of the multicultural program will have continual

impact for the future social and educational considerations in this district. The results of the study will be shared with faculty when their new Principal is on board, along with the intern's E-mail address for further contacts as they continue the multicultural exposure and continued communication with the high school's minority clubs as a multicultural resource.

The study's results will be beneficial because the current educational leader recently resigned to become a Superintendent at a smaller school district; therefore, a new leader will be in place soon at the elementary level. Although the former principal was extremely receptive to the diversity program, the new leader will find the results of the study to be informative and beneficial to continue communication with the high school.

As a new leader takes charge, he will benefit from the study's data, the importance of addressing the diversity issue at the rural elementary school as early as possible and continue throughout the upper grades to prepare for the high school transition. Faculty members at Dennis Township Elementary school have already expressed interest in the next year's multicultural visitations by the minority students as well as interest in the communication and support built by the diversity programs. Of course, there are an unlimited number of opportunities that a continued multicultural program can lead to with the progressive vision shared by an educational leader that sees diversity as a priority. This study is an example of the benefits brought by increased communication between both schools districts to sensitize all students to the value of cultural uniqueness. The educational leaders in both districts should maintain continued focus in the aforementioned areas, if possible.

Dennis Township Elementary school students have recently become more involved with the high school students and programs offered at the high school. They have participated in curriculum articulation, club activities and various projects allowing for increased opportunities of student, staff and administrative interaction. With the new leader, hopefully the communication and the multicultural programs will continue to evolve to a more involved and expansive project utilizing several of the schools in the district. The new principal and teachers can utilize outside resources as close as the high school or expand to the surrounding communities for multicultural experiences to present to the students. A true leap of faith can be shown by hiring of minority educators to teach within the district. Student acceptance of differences can surely be continued by periodically reviewing the study of assessing the effects of exposure to multicultural learning on a school population with limited diversity.

This study revealed that increased exposure to multicultural experiences led to an increased appreciation and a broader understanding of ethnic groups. The district should continue to develop a wider range of cultural exposure that is more inclusive than just holidays and heroes. Ultimately, they should seek to infuse it into pedagogies which include staffing, teacher preparation, parent involvement, student involvement, reading materials, bulletin boards and foods in the cafeteria. The multicultural exposure will help these students to overcome the cultural isolation that the lack of diversity in their rural school may impose and develop a sense of mutual understanding and respect, rather than suspicion and prejudice. Through the continued examination of other diverse groups of people, the students of Dennis Township Elementary school will build a broader understanding of cultures that the future will most certainly require.



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**Appendix A**  
**Survey Instruments**



**SCHOOL .....**

**Diversity Survey - STUDENTS  
- Pre-Test Survey**

**DATE .....**

**Lynda Anderson-Towns  
Rowan University -1998-99  
Internship**

**Please respond to the following questions as accurately as possible.**

1. I Like meeting new friends.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
2. I enjoy learning about different races of people and their ways of life.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
3. I would enjoy a friend that looked different than me.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
4. I think that I would enjoy being in a class with students from many different races.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
5. My teacher talks about getting along with others even if they look different than me.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
6. I would enjoy being on a team in school with a person who is a different color than I am.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
7. I enjoy reading stories with different races of people in them.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
8. I would like to learn about other holidays or customs celebrated by other groups of people in the United States.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
9. I would not mind if my teacher was a different color than I am.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
10. I think that we should try to get to know someone even if they look different than we do.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often



SCHOOL .....

**Diversity Survey - STUDENTS - Post-Test Survey**

**Lynda Anderson-Towns**

DATE .....

**Rowan University - 1998-99 Internship**

**Please respond to the following questions as accurately as possible.**

1. I Like meeting new friends.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
2. I enjoy learning about different races of people and their ways of life.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
3. I would enjoy a friend that looked different than me.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
4. I think that I would enjoy being in a class with students from many different races.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
5. My teacher talks about getting along with others even if they look different than me.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
6. I would enjoy being on a team in school with a person who is a different color than I am.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
7. I enjoy reading stories with different races of people in them.  
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8. I would like to learn about other holidays or customs celebrated by other groups of people in the United States.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
9. I would not mind if my teacher was a different color than I am.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often
10. I think that we should try to get to know someone even if they look different than we do.  
..... Never ..... Sometimes ..... Often

- **OPEN END - Please tell me about your favorite program or activity. What did you enjoy about it? ( Write your response on the back of the survey.)**

## Biographical Data

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