



## **Abstract: Diversity, Inclusion, and Cultural Awareness for Classroom and Outreach Education**



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As diversity continues to grow in education, creating learning environments that are equally beneficial to all students is imperative. Diversity in education is evident in a number of student characteristics, including gender, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, learning ability, and language proficiency. This ARP information sheet and literature overview examine the benefits of diversity, inclusion, and cultural awareness in education and the consequences when these elements are lacking, including the following:

- Attitudes of diverse students when they perceive barriers in the educational system. For example, when minority students feel that teachers provide less interaction and support to them than to others and when minority students are not shown minority role models excelling in diverse careers, these students may begin to believe that they are not capable of pursuing a career in that field (Gushue & Whitson, 2006; McWhirter, 1997).
- Negative impacts of perceived and actual barriers in education. A lack of inclusion leads many students to form opinions that they cannot succeed, and ultimately they may disidentify or remove themselves from such fields (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Strambler & Weinstein, 2010).
- Benefits of increasing diversity and inclusion in education, and strategies that can make this process effective. Increasing diversity can remediate many of the negative effects of isolation and promote positive learning and citizenship outcomes (Gurin, 2002).

The information sheet illustrates the consequences of lack of diversity and inclusion that might have occurred for Jennifer, an 11th grader who attended a summer outreach-program in engineering but felt isolated and decided, as a result, that she would not pursue this field. The illustration shows the consequences of noninclusiveness and explores remediation strategies.

The literature overview summarizes the empirical research on diversity, which suggests that diversity, inclusion, and cultural awareness can be increased by strategies such as promoting outreach education to students, incorporating active learning tasks (Hebl & King, 2004; Knight, Hebl, Mendoza, 2004) and culturally responsive learning (Gay, 2002) into curricula, and providing successful diverse role models for students (Marx & Roman, 2002).

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### **Recommended Reading**

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