



Six Critical Paradigm Shifts for Multicultural Education (and the Questions We Should Be Asking)

By Paul C. Gorski (gorski@earthlink.net)
for **EdChange** and the *Multicultural Pavilion*
<http://www.edchange.org/multicultural>
<http://www.mhhe.com/multicultural>

1. **The Base Shift: Equality → Equity**

- a. Does every student who walks into our schools have an opportunity to achieve to her or his fullest regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, first language, (dis)ability, and other social and cultural identifiers?
- b. Is my work contextualized in a bigger social picture that incorporates the history of oppression experienced by a variety of individuals and groups?

2. **Identifying "at-risk" students → Acknowledging a broken system**

- a. Who am I problematizing?
- b. Is my goal to make shifts in student outcomes (for which inequities are actually symptoms, not the root problems) working within a broken and inherently racist, sexist, classist, etc., system? Is this possible?

3. **Color-blindness → Self-examination**

- a. How am I recycling the history of inequity in education?
- b. Is color-blindness possible? And if so, is it desirable?

4. **Learning about "other cultures" → Dismantling systems of power and privilege**

- a. "Other" than what?
- b. Is my work focused on helping people feel OK sitting next to each other, or on addressing the root problem of imbalances of power and privilege that will remain regardless of who sits next to whom?

5. **Celebrating diversity → Advocating and fighting for equity**

- a. Am I asking students who are already alienated by most aspects of education to celebrate a difference for which they are routinely oppressed? If so, to whose benefit?
- b. Can I justify the use of limited resources for celebration when inequities persist?

6. **Focus on intent → Focus on impact**

- a. Is it enough that I intend to do well and fight toward equity, even when my work is misguided and recycles oppressive systems?
- b. Is it enough to support equity philosophically (such as including it in a school mission statement) while I fail to reflect equity in practice?