What Is Your School's MEQ?

If your school's multicultural education program is worthwhile, it practices what it preaches.

Geneva Gay
To determine your school’s multicultu-
ral climate, once these categories are
chosen, specific pertinent questions
should be given to attitudes and feel-
ings and to application of learnings to real
situations as to acquiring informa-
tion.

A good multicultural program ad-
dresses many different ethnic groups,
includes both historical and con-
temporary perspectives, and focuses
on variations and similarities within
and among different ethnic groups.
School nutritionists and planners of
assembly programs are as responsible
for ethnic diversity and cultural
pluralism as are the social studies
teachers. In short, the program is
comprehensive, integrative, and sys-
temic.

Criteria
To determine your school’s multi-
cultural education quotient, begin by
dividing the schooling process into
areas of operation, such as curricu-
um and instruction, staffing, support
services, student activities, and school
climate. Once these categories are
chosen, specific pertinent questions
can be identified.

Following is a list of 45 criteria
for assessing MEQ, grouped by func-
tion. These questions are not manda-
tory or exhaustive, but they do pro-
vide minimum guidelines.

Curriculum and Instruction
1. Does the content accurately
present ethnic groups’ experiences,
life styles, and cultures?
2. Are racial minorities and white
ethnic groups included in discus-
sions about ethnicity and cultural
pluralism?
3. Is the content about ethnic di-

verseity and cultural pluralism evident
in all aspects of the instructional
plans for given subjects and in the
total school curricula?
4. Are the learning styles, value
systems, and cultural conditioning of
different ethnic groups considered
seriously and consistently in deter-
mining instructional modalities? In
providing learning alternatives? In
assessing student performance?
5. Is pluralism a critical factor in
the selection of instructional ma-
terials?
6. Are ethnically and culturally
diverse experiences, content, per-
spectives, and contexts used to teach
the fundamental skills of the various
school subjects?
7. Does the content address sim-
ilarities and differences within
and among ethnic groups? Histori-
cal and contemporary perspectives of
ethnic experiences? Heroes and heroines
as well as the general ethnic population?
8. Does the content make use of
many different information sources,
such as historical records, communal
experiences, case studies, academic
scholarship, and the arts?
9. Does the content examine both
positive and negative aspects of
ethnic experiences in American his-
tory, heritage, and contemporary
life?
10. Does pluralism permeate all
curriculum components (rationales,
goals and objectives, content, activi-
ties, evaluation) in all subjects?

“Achieving effective
multicultural education is a
schoolwide function; every
individual or group must
contribute to the process.”

Staffing
11. Is the school staff multiethnic
and multiracial?
12. How are the ethnic members
of the school staff distributed across
job classifications (administrators,
teachers, counselors, noncertified
staff)?
13. Are different ethnic groups
represented in leadership and deci-
sion-making positions?
14. Do individuals from various
ethnic groups on the staff reflect dif-
f erent ideological positions about
ethnic group membership and affilia-
tion?
15. What is the school’s policy on
affirmative action?
16. Are ethnic minority staff
members role models for students from
different ethnic and cultural back-
grounds?
17. How do staff members from
different ethnic groups interact and
work with each other?
18. Is racial or ethnic clustering
among staff members consistent
throughout school functions, activi-
ties, and operations?
19. Is the school staff informed
about the specifics of ethnicity and
cultural pluralism and how these spe-
cifics relate to their own job func-
tions?
20. Does the staff recognize and
promote ethnic and cultural plural-
ism in their respective operational
areas?

Support Services
21. Are multicultural resources
and multiethnic personnel repre-
sented among support services that
students use?
22. Are ethnically specific services
available to students?
23. Do the library and audiovisual
center have accurate and recent ma-
terials on ethnicity and cultural
pluralism?
24. Are these resources written,
audio, and visual materials of differ-
ent kinds, created by members of dif-
ferent ethnic groups, and about a
variety of ethnic experiences?
25. Do policies stipulate that all
student support services will be sen-
tive to and promote ethnic diversity
and cultural pluralism?
26. Are there adequate resources
(human, material, fiscal) for ethnically
diverse students who need help
in adjusting to the school culture?
27. Do counselors adjust their techniques to make them more compatible with the value systems and cultural styles of different ethnic groups?
28. Are school programs (assemblies, festivals, and dances) multi-ethnic and culturally pluralistic?

Student Activities
29. Does the school have a policy of nonrestricted membership in all student clubs, organizations, and activities?
30. Do ethnic students participate in all student activities and organizations or do they tend to cluster along ethnic and racial lines?
31. What is the quality and quantity of interethnic group relations in formal and informal school activities?
32. Are some student activities and organizations disproportionately high or low in ethnic representation?
33. Are student organizations’ planned activities pluralistic?
34. Are ethnic students both followers and leaders, doers and designers in student activities and organizations?
35. What techniques are used to elicit more diversified ethnic participation in student organizations and activities?
36. Is there racially motivated competition or hostility among student organizations?

School Climate
37. Are ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism evident in the physical aspects of the school and its classrooms?
38. Are cross-ethnic group interactions among students and teachers smooth and consistent?
39. Do students and teachers from different ethnic groups communicate and relate to each other as easily in noninstructional times as well as in instructional periods during the school day?
40. Do students and teachers from different ethnic groups work cooperatively to maintain a school climate that promotes ethnic and cultural pluralism?
41. Do school symbols, signs, and insignia (mottoes, showcase displays, songs, and mascots) reflect ethnic and cultural pluralism?
42. Are school procedures flexible enough to allow for free expression of cultural pluralism?
43. Are opportunities available to honor specific ethnic and racial minority individuals and events?
44. Do students from different ethnic groups feel comfortable and have a sense of ownership or pride in the school?
45. How are students from different ethnic groups encouraged and rewarded to work together to create a school spirit that incorporates elements of ethnic diversity and cultural pluralism?

Conclusion
Achieving effective multicultural education is a schoolwide function; every individual or group must contribute to the process. For some, their contributions will be very direct, formal, instrumental, and technical; for others, they will be more indirect, incidental, tangential, and informal. An adequate assessment of the program, like the program itself, must be holistic and systemic in content and form.