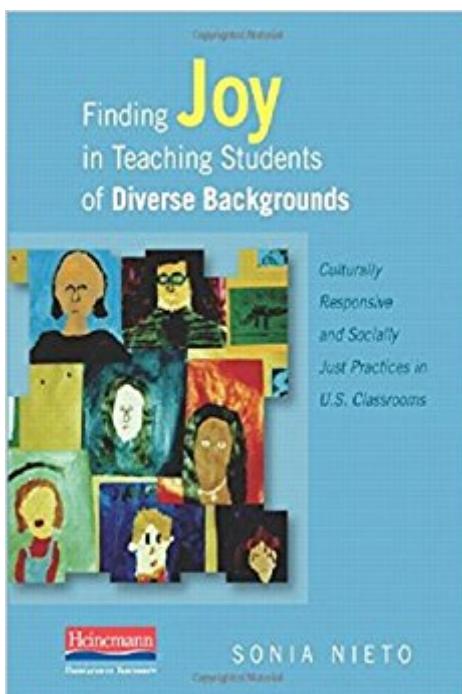


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# Finding Joy In Teaching Students Of Diverse Backgrounds: Culturally Responsive And Socially Just Practices In U.S. Classrooms



## **Synopsis**

"While no check-list of attitudes, dispositions, behaviors, or actions can define what thriving teachers look like, the teachers interviewed here give us powerful examples of what it takes to face their profession with courage, their content with enthusiasm, and their students with love." -Sonia Nieto One in four public school students in the U.S. now speaks a language other than English at home, and the number of emergent bilingual and immigrant children in our schools continues to grow daily. What does it mean to be a teacher today, when students are more diverse in language, culture, race, and social class than ever before? What does it take to thrive, when the demands of teaching have never been greater? Sonia Nieto found and interviewed 22 teachers of varying backgrounds and school settings who help answer the question of what effective, culturally responsive teaching looks like in the real world. Their stories of success, failure, frustration and hope will resonate with everyone who has struggled to meet the needs of diverse students in our current sociopolitical context. Nieto explores the common themes that arose throughout the interviews, of teaching with a social justice perspective, the moral dimensions of teaching, advocating for students, and challenging the status quo. She raises a persuasive argument that teaching is an ethical endeavor, that we must honor students' identities and believe in their futures, and that ultimately teaching is an act of love. The stories of Nieto's passionate teachers will inspire and motivate you to find joy in teaching students of diverse backgrounds. Read a sample chapter!

## **Book Information**

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## Customer Reviews

"Sonia Nieto has done it again. Another discerning work on the challenges teachers face when they confront the status quo, and the joy they find in working with young people who are often viewed as "the other" by the mainstream of society. Finding Joy in Teaching Students of Diverse Backgrounds presents a grim view of the mindless uniformity imposed upon our schools by standardized curricula. But the voices of the teachers leave us with a sense of hope that, if we cannot change the world, each of us can at least change a piece of it for children we respect and love." --Jonathan Kozol"Sonja Nieto reminds us in this beautifully written book that powerful instruction is happening all around us and that we need to look to our classrooms and our thriving teachers for guidance and direction. While honoring the voices of practicing educators, Nieto offers an inspiring and informative model of humane, engaging, and socially just teaching for today's diverse classrooms. I came away feeling more energized and committed than ever to do better for our children." --Ernest Morrell, Director, Institute for Urban and Minority Education (IUME) and President-elect, National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)"In a political context where teachers' work gets systematically derogated and demonized, this text is a refreshing and stirring call to prospective and actual teachers everywhere to a renewed understanding of teaching as a thoroughly ethical, political, humanistic, and social justice endeavor. Sonja Nieto's clear, informative, and courageous voice inspires the thought that culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy is that rock upon which a loving, caring and effective practice can be built. Kudos for immensely important work at a critical time in our nation's history." --Angela Valenzuela, Professor, University of Texas College of EducationIn her remarkable new book, Sonja Nieto shares insightful research, based on teachers' experiences, which she then uses to critique educational reforms from outside. She highlights a broad range of teachers who all feel relentless outside pressure, but still find ways to thrive with a joyful pedagogy based on realism and hope. --Joan Wink, as reviewed in *Multicultural Perspectives*In a political context where teachers' work gets systematically derogated and demonized, this text is a refreshing and stirring call to prospective and actual teachers everywhere to a renewed understanding of teaching as a thoroughly ethical, political, humanistic, and social justice endeavor. Sonja Nieto's clear, informative, and courageous voice inspires the thought that culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy is that rock upon which a loving, caring and effective practice can be built. Kudos for immensely important work at a critical time in our nation's history. --Angela Valenzuela, Professor, University of Texas College of Education

Educator, researcher, writer, and teacher, Sonia Nieto is Professor Emerita of Language, Literacy, and Culture, School of Education, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. In her career, she has taught students from elementary school through doctoral studies and her research has focused on multicultural education, teacher education, and the education of Latinos, immigrants, and other students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. With many journal articles, book chapters, and several books to her credit, she has received numerous awards for her scholarship, teaching, and advocacy, including four honorary doctorates. She was selected as a Fellow of the American Educational Research Association and as a Laureate for Kappa Delta Pi in 2011, and in 2012 she served as the Wits-Claude Distinguished Scholar at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa.

Sonia Nieto brings the heart back in teaching. I especially enjoyed chapter 4 "If I haven't Taught Them How to Be Good People, That's Failure" Nieto's chapter was interesting because it touched on topics not addressed in our common core standards: ethics and morals. Teaching ethical and moral behavior not only by showing/modeling, but infusing it in the curriculum. I totally agree that exclusive focus on standardized tests has taken over education, (p. 48). Where is the personal connection in just learning for the test? I totally agree with Carmen, one of the teachers in the chapter, when she stressed we have to love our students unconditionally, no matter what they bring into the classroom (p. 48). She also went on to say you tell them you love them. I do so with my students, and I have found more harmony in the classroom, more compliments given to peers, and they tell me they love me back! Nieto's chapter gave me more hope as a white teacher. I read many excerpts on white teachers who are culturally responsive to their diverse population of students. One quote that really resonated with me from the Nieto chapter was on defining culturally responsive pedagogy. Culturally responsive pedagogy is not a set of strategies to use with students of a particular background but rather a mindset that respects and honors students' cultures, experiences, and histories and finds ways to include them in the curriculum. Culturally responsive teaching affirms students' identities and at the same time expands their world; it respects and admires student and their communities and holds high expectations for them. (p. 53).

Great book! Sharing it for sure!

I have been recommending this book just to read. I bought it for a class but there is so much interesting information. Love it!

I've only read the first couple of chapters so far for a course I am currently taking. I can't wait to read the rest and will try to update when I can.

Excellent book, nice read, great price!

Excellent resource.

Was purchased for someone else.

Wonderful text for all teachers to read! Although chapters can feel redundant at times, this is a good tool to refer to if you want to find motivation and spark new ideas to implement in the classroom to meet the needs of diverse groups of students. Nieto brings to light exemplary stories of culturally responsive teachers who take pride in their work and showcases the small differences they make in their teaching that have profound impacts on their students' lives. I want to highlight Chapter 3 titled, "Whom You Teach, Not Just What You Teach." This chapter embraces the idea that teaching is an act of love and emphasizes the importance of seeing each student as a child who has potential regardless of their background, race, color, identity, etc. It requires teachers to care, provide an environment to foster humanity, to be a positive role model, and to truly get to know each of their students. Overall, I recommend this book to any and all teachers. It is an easy read and addresses some important issues that are currently polluting the educational system today.

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