

# THE DIVERSITY KIT

An Introductory Resource for  
Social Change in Education

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PART I:

HUMAN  
DEVELOPMENT



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is intelligence? How is human development affected by culture? How can our knowledge of human development inform our work as educators working with an increasingly diverse student population? In this section of *The Diversity Kit* we tackle these questions and more. We begin with an introduction of the topic of human development and we review some of the current literature on that topic. The goal of the section is to underscore that human development is a lifelong process undertaken by young children, adolescents, and adults alike. We also highlight the social dimension of human development. That is, human development is not merely a mixture of biological, neurological, and cognitive functioning; it is a process largely mediated by and situated in culture. For that reason, in this section of *The Diversity Kit*, we expand our discussion to include the areas of cultural anthropology, sociolinguistics, and sociology.

There are four major tenets on which we base this chapter:

1. Human development is a dynamic, ongoing process rather than a static product. As with the brain itself, intelligence is malleable and largely shaped by experience and learning.
2. While we know that certain similarities in development can occur among groups of individuals, the stages and rates of human development are particular to an individual. In that sense, human development is an individual process.
3. There are multiple types of intelligences; formal education can draw upon only a fraction of an individual's intelligence.
4. Education and human development have a sociocultural basis. Learning is not only an individual, psychological process, it is also a social process.

Ideally, information presented in this section of *The Diversity Kit* will assist educators in their knowledge of human development and will bridge information on human development with the education of diverse learners. The information and research is presented to inform educators' choices of instructional strategies and curricular materials used in the classroom. From the information presented in this section of *The Diversity Kit*, educators will gain broad understanding of human development, how learning occurs, and how student learning can be most effectively facilitated.

# HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: A MULTIDISCIPLINARY APPROACH

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

- ? *What do we know about human development?  
How is human development situated in culture?*
- ? *How can we use students' own theories, ideas, and interests as a basis for developing and applying new skills, knowledge, and habits of mind?*
- ? *How can we understand and value students' ways of thinking and communicating their ideas? How does knowing this inform our work as educators?*