

Culturally Responsive Strategies



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM COMMUNITIES

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Introduction

Classroom management continues to be a topic of concern for teachers, administrators, families, and schools. Given the increasing diversity of our schools, a lack of multicultural competence only adds to the challenges that novice teachers have with classroom management ¹(Jones, 2006). As our classrooms continue to ethnically and racially diversify, student learning is contingent upon a teacher's ability to create and sustain an optimal learning environment ²(Brown, 2004; Futrell, Gomez, & Bedden, 2003). Teachers that enter classrooms with a lack of multicultural competence have a difficult time forming relationships with students, cultivating a safe and respectful classroom community, and managing behavior and communication patterns of culturally and linguistically diverse students ³(Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004).

Considering the issues of disproportionality and exclusionary disciplinary practices, equipping teachers with a stronger classroom management approach focused on culturally responsive teaching is likely to help address these racial and cultural disparities ⁴(Gay 2006; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002).

The primary purpose of this professional development is to provide educators with a curriculum to help support the development of their culturally responsive classroom management practice (CRCM). Practitioners need to be cognizant of their students' characteristics, appreciate their culture and family backgrounds, and be able to work with them in culturally appropriate ways. Providing educators support in CRCM practices will help ensure that all students have access to a positive, consistent, safe, and equitable educational setting.

Practitioners will be introduced to some of the essential core practices for developing one's culturally responsive management practice. These include building social relationships, communicating in culturally responsive ways, cultivating a safe and inclusive environment, and engaging with families and communities. In addition, they will be provided the opportunity to reflect, discuss, and share their cultural assumptions and beliefs to examine their cultural histories and biases in working with students from culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse backgrounds.

¹ Jones, V. (2006). How do teachers learn to be effective classroom managers? In C. M. Evertson, & Weinstein, C. S (Eds.), *Handbook of Classroom Management* (pp. 887-907). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

² Brown, D. F. (2004). Urban teachers' professed classroom management strategies: Reflections of culturally responsive teaching. *Urban Education*, 39(3), 266–289; Futrell, M. H., Gomez, J., & Bedden, D. (2003). Teaching the children of a new America: The challenge of diversity. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 84(5).

³ Weinstein, C. S., & Tomlinson-Clarke, S., Curran, Mary. (2004). Toward a conception of culturally responsive classroom management. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55(1), 25–38.

⁴ Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106–116; Skiba, R. J., Michael, R. S., & Nardo, A. C., Peterson, Reece L. (2002). The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment. *Urban Review*, 34(4), 317–42.

The Culture of Courageous Conversations: Moving Opportunities and Conflicts to Growth, Reflection and Practice

(Adapted from Glenn Singleton)

Stay engaged

- It's important that you stay present in the room. Pay attention to when you are shutting down. Discomfort and anxiety are normal parts of courageous conversations.
- If you find yourself needing to stand up, please do so.

Speak Your Truth

- The purpose of having these conversations is to be able to speak our truths about our experiences. If not here, where, if not now, when?
- We often avoid speaking our truth for fear of what others might say. It's important that we create a safe environment where everyone is free to speak openly.
- Keep in mind that people are in different places in this work. In order for us to grow, it's important that people are able to share their thoughts in a way that's comfortable for them.
- When we share our thoughts, it often creates an emotional reaction from others. Being able to speak your truth does not mean that people will not respond emotionally. Be prepared to experience the discomfort that race conversations bring.
- Remember that everyone does not communicate in the same way that you do. If someone gets loud in the room, it doesn't mean they are angry. If they are angry, it doesn't necessarily mean they are angry at you. If they are angry with something you said, it doesn't mean that person no longer has a relationship with you. Often times these conversations bring up a lot of emotions from past and present experiences. Try and allow others to experience their emotions without your shutting down.

No Fixing

- This is not about fixing others. The journey of cultural competency is about changing yourself and introducing others to different perspectives and experiences for personal reflection and understanding.

Experience Discomfort

- One way to think about this is "be comfortable with being uncomfortable". In other words, discomfort is to be expected.
- If you are not feeling any sense of discomfort in the dialogue, ask yourself are you fully engaged? Are you giving of yourself fully and taking risk.

Expect and Accept Non-closure

- In our society today, we often want to feel some sense of closure, regardless of the issue. Engaging in race conversations means there will be times of no closure. This is on-going work that does not necessarily leave one walking away feeling like everything turned out the way you hoped. Be willing to take risks and accept that much of this is about changing yourself not others.

Listen for Understanding

- Try and understand where another person is coming from as best you can.
- Be careful not to compare your experiences with another person. This often invalidates or minimizes person's experiences.
- Listen without thinking about how you are going to respond.
- Stay present in their pain and your discomfort as you listen.
- If someone is pointing out how what you said left them feeling, try not to explain or rationalize what you said or why you said it. For example, sometimes it's necessary to just say, "I don't realize what I said was inappropriate..." Or "hurt you in that way" "I'm sorry, etc."
- Think about your comments before saying them. Resist the need to explain. Sometimes positive intent is not enough (intent vs. impact). Be careful not to lose the opportunity to just listen by putting the focus back on you.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE: AWARENESS

(Adapted from Sue & Sue)

1. The culturally competent educator is one who has moved from being culturally unaware to being aware and sensitive to his or her own cultural heritage and to valuing and respecting differences.
 - The professional has begun the process of exploring his/her values, standards and assumptions about difference and human behavior.
 - Rather than being ethnocentric and believing in the superiority of his or her group's cultural heritage (arts, crafts, traditions, language), there is curiosity, acceptance and respect for cultural differences.
 - Other cultures and sociodemographic groups are seen as equally valuable and legitimate.
2. The culturally competent educator is aware of his or her own values and biases and how they may affect students, student of color, families, and other marginalized social groups.
 - The educator actively and constantly attempts to avoid microaggressions, prejudices, unwarranted labeling, stereotyping. The responsive educator evaluates the impact of their own implicit biases and introduces new choice points and experiences to specifically target areas of bias and lack of knowledge. (e.g., disproportionality of discipline and expulsions among students of color, English Language Learner trends, immigrant status, LGBTQ+)
 - Culturally responsive educators try not to hold preconceived limitations and notions about culturally diverse people.
 - The educator actively challenges their assumptions; tries to find effective ways to work cross-culturally; and monitors their functioning via consultations, supervision, and professional development.
3. Culturally responsive educators are comfortable with differences that exist between themselves and others in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, and other socio-demographic variables. Differences are not seen as negative.
 - Does not profess color blindness or negate the existence of differences in behavior, attitudes, cultural norms, beliefs, etc., among different groups.
4. The culturally responsive educator is sensitive to circumstances (personal biases; stage of racial, gender, and sexual orientation identity; sociopolitical influences, etc) that may dictate referral of a student to a member of his or her own socio-demographic group.
 - A culturally competent professional is aware of his or her limitations and is not threatened by the prospect of seeking assistance and support from others. However...
 - This principal should not be used as a cop-out for the professional who does not work with culturally diverse students, staff and families, or who do not want to work through their own personal hang-ups.
5. The culturally competent educator acknowledges and is aware of his or her own racist, sexist, heterosexist, or other detrimental attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and feelings.
 - A culturally competent professional does not deny the fact that he or she has directly or indirectly benefited from individual, institutional, and cultural biases and that he or she has been socialized into such a society. As a result, the culturally competent professional inherits elements in the socialization process that may be detrimental to culturally and ethnically diverse students, staff and families.
 - Culturally responsive educators and professionals accept responsibility for their own racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc., and attempts to deal with them in a non-defensive, guilt-free manner. They have begun the process of defining a new non-oppressive and non-exploitive attitude. In terms of racism, for example, addressing one's Whiteness (e.g., white privilege) is crucial for effective teaching.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE: KNOWLEDGE

(Adapted from Sue & Sue)

1. The culturally responsive educator must possess specific knowledge and information about the particular group he or she is working with.
 - Be aware of the history, experiences, cultural values, and lifestyles of various socio-demographic groups in our society.
 - Understands the idea that the greater the depth of knowledge of one cultural group and the more knowledge the professional has of many groups, the more likely it is that he/she can be effective in his/her role.
 - Thus, the culturally competent professional is one who continues to explore and learn about issues related to various marginalized groups throughout his or her professional career.
2. The culturally responsive educator will have a good understanding of the sociopolitical system's operating in the United States with respect to treatment of marginalized groups in our society.
 - Understands the impact and operation of oppression (racism, sexism, heterosexism, etc.), the politics of the education system, and the racist, sexist and homophobic concepts that have permeated institutions.
 - Understands the role that ethnocentric monoculturalism plays in the development of identity and worldviews among students of color and marginalized groups.
3. The culturally responsive educator must have clear and explicit knowledge and understanding of the generic characteristics in individuals from diverse ethnic, racial and socioeconomic backgrounds.
 - These encompass language factors, culture-bound values, and class-bound values. The professional should understand the value assumptions (normality and abnormality) inherit in education and how they may interact with values of the culturally different student, staff, and families.
 - In some cases, applying theories or models to a particular group, may limit the potential of persons from different cultures. Likewise, being able to determine those that may be useful to culturally and ethnically diverse individuals is important.
4. The culturally responsive educator is aware of institutional barriers that prevent some diverse students and families from accessing services.
 - Important factors include the location of services, access to advanced classes and honors classes, the formality or informality of décor, advertising services and events in English only, granting access to language interpreters including deaf and hard of hearing communities, school climate, hours and days of operation, transportation, childcare, and how services/events are viewed by some cultures.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE: SKILLS

(Adapted from Sue & Sue)

1. At the skills level, the culturally competent educator must be able to generate a wide variety of verbal and nonverbal responses.
 - Mounting evidence indicates that different groups may not only define problems differently from their majority counterparts, but also respond differently to teaching styles.
 - Thus, the wider the repertoire of response and pedagogy the educator possesses the better educator he or she is likely to be.
 - We can no longer rely on a very narrow and limited number of skills in teaching. We need to practice and be comfortable with a multitude of teaching styles and modalities.
2. The culturally responsive educator must be able to send and receive both verbal and nonverbal messages accurately and appropriately.
 - The culturally skilled professional must be able not only to communicate (send) his or her thoughts and feelings to the student/family, but also to read (receive) messages from the student/family (verbal and nonverbal messages).
 - Sending and receiving a message accurately means the ability to consider cultural cues operating within a setting.
 - Accuracy of communications must be tempered by its appropriateness. In many cultures, subtlety and indirectness are appreciated. Likewise, others appreciate directness and confrontation.
3. The culturally responsive educator is able to exercise a variety relationship building skills with his or her students, family members and co-workers when appropriate.
 - This implies that teaching may involve out-of-classroom strategies including; attending special events, outreach, acting as a change agent, and home-community visits.
4. The culturally responsive educator is aware of his or her helping style, recognizes the limitations that he or she possesses, and can anticipate the impact on culturally diverse students.
 - When teaching-style adjustments appear too difficult, the next best thing to do may be to
 - i. Acknowledge your limitations and consult with other professionals
 - ii. Anticipate the impact your limitations on others
 - iii. Participate in Culturally Relevant Professional Development
 - These things may communicate several things to your culturally diverse students, families and coworkers: first that you are open and honest about your style of communication and the limitations or barriers they may potentially cause; second, that you understand enough about their worldview to anticipate how this may adversely affect them; third, that as a professional, it is important for you to communicate your desire to help despite your limitations; and fourth, that you care enough to do something about it.

CULTURAL COMPETENCE: ADVOCACY ACTION

(Adapted from Judith H. Katz)

Cultural Racism:

"These aspects of society that overtly and covertly attribute value and normality to white people and whiteness, and devalue, stereotype, and label people of color as "other", different, less than, or render them invisible"

Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, Adams, Bell & Griffin

Ways to combat racism:

- Educate co-workers and close friends about individual, interpersonal and institutional racism.
- Raise equity issues in the workplace with people in power, co-workers and staff.
- Change what normally appears on bulletin boards, walls, handouts, newsletters, and other materials relevant to race, ethnicity, and culture.
- Be a referral resource—direct individuals to people or groups who might be of assistance.
- Act as a role model, take risks and question the preference for White power structures.
- Establish discussion groups and other activities in your school or workplace around race, ethnicity and culture, e.g., book studies, films, journal articles, exercises, etc.
- Allocate and use resources in a way that promote equity for students, staff and clients of color.
- Assess the cultural environment of your workplace to ensure that it reflects and honors the diversity of students, staff and community (e.g., assemblies, activities/events, décor, number of staff of color).
- Seek out and actively participate in culturally relevant professional development to enhance your own awareness, knowledge and skills in effectively working cross-culturally.
- Examine policies within your organization to see if they meet the needs of diverse students, staff, and community.
- Openly disagree with racist comments, jokes or actions of those around you.
- Take the time to complain to those in charge when you notice racism inside and outside of your school or work place.
- Demonstrate a willingness to change self versus others as it relates to cultural norms, values, behaviors, and attitudes.
- Develop an "Equity Team" to include people in positions of power.
- Question the norms of meetings to ensure fairness, inclusion and equity.
- Review hiring policy and practices to include diversity beyond legal jargon.
- Review the mission and vision of your organization to include equity, diversity and racial justice.
- Make sure that your organizations evaluations and assessment tools take into consideration issues of racism, power, privilege, and oppression.
- Examine curricula in your classroom and school for multicultural content and anti-bias.
- Align curriculum within your grade level and the school vs. independent teaching.
- Include diverse ethnic and socio-economic representation in decision making.
- Engage in conversations around race and social justice issues with your students and colleagues.

TABLE 1
Framework for Increasing Equity in School Discipline

Prevention	1. Supportive Relationships	Authentic connections are forged between and among teachers and students.
	2. Bias-Aware Classrooms and Respectful School Environments	Inclusive, positive classroom and school environments are established in which students feel fairly treated.
	3. Academic Rigor	The potential of all students is promoted through high expectations and high-level learning opportunities.
	4. Culturally Relevant and Responsive Teaching	Instruction reflects and is respectful of the diversity of today's classrooms and schools.
	5. Opportunities for Learning and Correcting Behavior	Behavior is approached from a nonpunitive mind-set, and instruction proactively strengthens student social skills, while providing structured opportunities for behavioral correction within the classroom as necessary.
Intervention	6. Data-Based Inquiry for Equity	Data are used regularly to identify "hot spots" of disciplinary conflict or differential treatment of particular groups.
	7. Problem-Solving Approaches to Discipline	Solutions aim to uncover sources of behavior or teacher–student conflict and address the identified needs.
	8. Inclusion of Student and Family Voice on Conflicts' Causes and Solutions	Student and family voice are integrated into policies, procedures, and practices concerning school discipline.
	9. Reintegration of Students after Conflict or Absence	Students are supported in reentering the community of learners after conflict or long-term absence has occurred.
Prevention and Intervention	10. Multitiered System of Supports	Schools use a tiered framework to match increasing levels of intensity of support to students' differentiated needs.

Note. The numerical ordering of principles is not meant to suggest their relative importance.

