



The ABCs of Culturally Relevant Teaching and Learning: Acceptance, Building Relationships, and Continued Coaching

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Abstract: At the school where I am an instructional coach, both student achievement and discipline data is disproportionately high for our students of color. Therefore, I chose to study which culturally responsive/relevant strategies could be implemented in classrooms and how I could promote this work via my role. Participants in my study (all self-selected, n=9) took part in book studies and discussions regarding readings around cultural proficiency, completed a Cultural Frames of Reference survey; implemented culturally responsive/relevant strategies in their classrooms; and engaged in both pre and post-interviews with me so I could track their growth over the period of the intervention. Findings suggest that trusting relationships are the basis of culturally relevant teaching and learning. In addition, teachers need to continuously work at building their capacity to accept students for who they are and where they come from, and seek to understand their behavior as a form of communication. Next steps in this work are to recommend strategies for implementation school-wide; continue the conversation(s) started among those who have already begun the work; and begin the conversation and learning with those that have not yet started using a similar process to the one detailed in this action research project.

Research Questions

- What is the cultural identity or mindset (Hammond, 2015) of each teacher in this study?
- What culturally relevant strategy(ies) can teachers implement to increase student engagement, especially for Black, Hispanic, and Bi-racial students? How does teacher self-efficacy help or hinder implementation?
- What coaching stance or format of coaching cycles best help to promote this work?

Phases of the Study

Phase 1

- Read *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond (2015).
- Define and determine one's cultural identity.
- Choose two culturally relevant strategies as a group to try in classrooms.



Cultural Frames of Reference Survey

Adapted from

http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/tt_valuing_differences.pdf

In this exercise we are going to take an opportunity to reflect on

Phase 3

- Track and analyze student participation, especially that of Black, Hispanic, and Bi-Racial students, during the implementation of decided upon strategies.
- Make recommendations to building Administrative Team regarding which culturally relevant strategies should be implemented school-wide.



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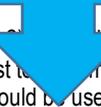
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Findings

- All participants, both teachers and students, shared that "family" was a key part of their cultural identity. The values of hard work and respect were shared.

Phase 2

- Read *For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood and the Rest of Ya'll Too* by Christopher Emdin (2016).
- List tensions between "traditional" pedagogy and reality pedagogy.
- Choose two culturally relevant strategies as a group to try in classrooms.



- The 10 to 2 (100%) and response strategies were the easiest to implement because they took little time and could be used with all students.
- At the beginning of the study I did not use a particular coaching stance. I was focused on creating a safe space for honest conversations. As teacher-participants began to build their knowledge base and increase their skill level I used the "Consulting" coaching stance most. However, by the end of the study I was using the "Coaching" stance on a regular basis to help teachers think through how they wanted to apply their learning to specific situations.
- All three teachers that were interviewed prior to and after this study believe that building trusting relationships with students is a key component to cultural relevant teaching and learning.

articulate them, and to listen fully to others as they do the same. When it is your turn, try to avoid a chronological recitation of your life (i.e. I was born this year, I moved here this year, etc.). Rather, focus on how being born in that particular time and place shaped your view and how you came to understand the world.

This exercise can be very powerful and even emotional. You may share whatever you like and are not required to share anything that makes you uncomfortable. When we are not sharing our own frames, our task will be to listen to others. We will not comment or question during this exercise.

To begin, spend a few minutes thinking about your frames and jotting down some notes for yourself. Some possible dimensions to consider:

Family: How has your family shaped your worldview?

Place: What about the regions/neighborhoods/countries in which you have lived influenced how you interpret the world?

Class: How does your class background (i.e. poor, working class, middle class, upper class) shape your expectations about your future? Where you believe you can go? What resources you have access to? How you view those in different class groups?

Religion: Were you raised with a certain religious tradition? How did it shape you? What kind of framework did (does) it provide for you?

Race/Ethnicity: Did you grow up with a sense of yourself as a member of an ethnic or racial group? If so, how, if at all, has your sense of race/ethnicity shaped how you see yourself, the world and/or your place in the world? If not, how, if at all, has this affected how you see the world and your place in it?

Body: How do aspects of your body influence your orientation to the world? How about your skin color? Ability? Age?
Health?

Gender: What messages have you received about what it means to be your gender? What roles and expectations do others have for you based on your gender? What opportunities does your gender afford you? What challenges?

Sexuality: How does your sexuality shape how you interpret the world? How you define yourself, your life expectations, your partners, your family? What privileges or challenges does it present to you?

Additional Categories: Are there additional socially significant categories that you want to highlight? These could include things like undocumented status or other categories that are not usually talked about.

Experiences: Are there key experiences that have shaped how you interpret the world?