

Culturally responsive leaders understand how values and beliefs influence individual's day-to-day decision-making and behavior in schools. It is critically important to recognize and understand the relationship between what an individual says they believe and what they actually do. Effective leaders must understand what, how, and the impact on which their beliefs have on how they lead others.

Leaders support implementation of culturally responsive practices in their schools through multiple opportunities. These include modeling mindsets, setting up a welcoming learning environment, pushing academic achievements, understanding other cultures, and insisting on sociopolitical consciousness. Culturally responsive leaders facilitate and support the achievement of all students by being mindful to respect all differences. Leaders must encourage a learning environment where all students are welcome, supported, and provided with the best opportunities to learn regardless of their cultural backgrounds. Learning environments foster rigorous, exciting, challenging and equitable opportunities for all students. Culturally responsive leaders must understand and facilitate the learning process across the various student cultural and linguist groups. Most importantly, leaders must recognize and assist students in understanding their learning does not occur without influences from others, culturally and linguistically.

Leaders and teachers provide equity for all students by acknowledging and listening to student voice. Leaders must use a variety of methods to understand students. Leaders must accept identities, build relationships, acknowledge value and use cultural resources, and most importantly challenge exclusionary policies, staff, and behaviors. Leaders must demonstrate cultural leadership through the processes of hiring professionals, developing and offering

continued professional development and allocating resources effectively. Additionally, addressing issues of social justice with all stakeholders is imperative to culturally responsive leadership.

The meaning of diversity is all the similarities and differences amongst people. This can include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, culture, language, religion, mental and physical abilities, class, and immigration status. I have had the pleasure of teaching in a very diverse school district. Within 36 buildings, over 70 languages and 60 countries make up the students of Syracuse City School District (SCSD). Of the 21,000 students, 4,000 students have learning and/or physical disabilities. In 2019, 10% of the student population were homeless or housed with another family. Every year, the diversity of the student body changes and the impacts they have on us foster our growth.

Leaders must ensure equitable access for all students through the understanding how varying experiences influence students, embracing diversity, and fostering connections between the school staff and the diverse populations they serve. Culturally responsive leaders need to merge curriculum innovation with social engagement. Throughout many buildings in the Syracuse City School District, students share in a yearly celebration of their cultures, this often includes a variety of activities from student demonstrations, presentation of their country's flag to exploration of their country's and culture's cuisines.