

WHAT IS CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS?

Culturally responsive pedagogy is an approach to teaching that places students at the center, identifying and nurturing their unique cultural strengths to promote student achievement and sense of belonging. Culturally responsive educators understand the importance of incorporating their students' unique cultural backgrounds into classroom practices in order to best support various aspects of their development and achievement.



“ ALTHOUGH RESEARCH HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT NATIONAL BOARD-CERTIFIED TEACHERS ARE MORE LIKELY THAN NONCERTIFIED TEACHERS TO FOSTER HIGH ACHIEVEMENT AMONG THEIR STUDENTS, ONLY 19% OF CERTIFIED TEACHERS TEACH IN SCHOOLS RATED IN THE LOWEST THIRD FOR ACHIEVEMENT ”
(ROGERS-SIRIN & SIRIN, 2009, PG. 20).

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY VS. MULTICULTURALISM

It is a common misconception that the terms cultural sensitivity, multiculturalism, and culturally responsive pedagogy all share the same meaning. In theory, these terms have very similar meanings, all intending to represent beliefs or actions that take into account the cultures of others, and use that knowledge to develop meaningful experiences. However, in practice, these concepts can look much different from each other. The “tourist curriculum” is a common mistake made by educators in an effort to bring multiculturalism into the classroom by falling into a superficial educational approach that “‘drops in’ on strange, exotic people to see their holidays and taste their foods, and then returns to the ‘real’ world of ‘regular’ life” instead of incorporating diversity into the daily classroom routine (Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010).

This type of othering of different cultures contributes to the “we” vs. “they” dichotomy that can exist in multicultural education if a balance between similarities and differences is not present in supporting children’s understanding of diversity.

EFFECTS ON CHILDREN IN ABSENCE OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

Studies have shown that children are likely to experience adverse effects on different aspects of their development, achievement, and attitudes/ understanding of diversity when they do not receive an education that takes into account their unique cultural backgrounds. These include, but are not limited to:

- Identity Development
- Lack of understanding/appreciation of diversity
- Internalized oppression
- Perpetuation of social inequities
- Discrimination
- Vulnerability to stereotype threat
- Academic achievement gaps

(Derman-Sparks & Olsen Edwards, 2010; Cousik, 2015; Okoye-Johnson, O. 2011; Rogers-Sirin, et al. 2009)



“RESEARCH HAS DEMONSTRATED THAT TEACHER EXPECTATIONS ARE INFLUENCED BY CULTURAL MISMATCH IN SCHOOLS, WHETHER BASED ON RACE, SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS, OR ETHNICITY, AND CAN LEAD TO LOWERED EXPECTATIONS FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS OR STUDENTS FROM MINORITY RACIAL AND ETHNIC GROUPS ”
(ROGERS-SIRIN, ET AL., 2009, PG. 19).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to reach the population that has the highest need for culturally responsive pedagogy, children in grades K-12, their teachers must be trained in cultural sensitivity and possess the skills necessary to adequately serve diverse groups of students. It is essential that cultural sensitivity training be incorporated into pre-service education programs.

Working models of these types of trainings identify the following concepts as key components of an effective program:

- Critical reflection
- Examination of one’s own culture, as well as others
- Ethical dilemma recognition
- Open dialogues
- Skills to address social inequities
- Inclusive curriculum
- Skills to address communities and families

(Colbert, 2010; Cousik, 2015; Lyons-Moore, 2014; Ngai, 2005; Okoye-Johnson, 2011; Rogers-Sirin, et al. 2009)