Cultural Competency Resources

Toolkit / Guide

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This paper was supported by the U.S. Department of Education through the Teacher Incentive Fund. The cultural competency literature, tools, and products reviewed are not endorsed by and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Education.
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This cultural competency resource document reviews various products, including literature, tools, handbooks, and other resources to help education organizations implement cultural competency professional learning and training for educators and other stakeholders.

Local education agency examples

1. Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Equity Initiative Unit

   The MCPS equity initiative unit site contains training and tools to help staff develop cultural proficiency. The site features MCPS’s framework to achieve equity, including closing the racial and ethnic achievement gap. The site also contains [Equitable Classroom Practices 2010](https://www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/clusteradmin/equity/index.aspx), which presents best practices for teaching diverse students. For example, the document delves into the importance of communicating high expectations to students. Additional resources include video segments on equity trainings and handouts to help educators incorporate best practices in fostering equitable instructional practices in the classroom.

2. Cultural Competence Facilitator’s Handbook and Participant’s Workbook
   Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS)
   [https://www.fcps.edu/node/32087](https://www.fcps.edu/node/32087)

   The FCPS site contains a Cultural Competence Facilitator’s Handbook and Participant’s Workbook. The Cultural Competence Facilitators’ Handbook guides facilitators in conducting sessions to help educators interact with diverse students. The district developed a series of videos to accompany the Facilitator’s Workbook. The handbook’s sections are described below.

   **Session 1 — Defining Culture and Reflecting on Personal Experiences**

   This session introduces participants to the definition of cultural competence, and provides them with an opportunity to reflect on their prior experiences and beliefs of different cultures. Participants also explore the cultures they belong to and the associated practices, beliefs and languages of these cultures.

   **Session 2 — The 4 Stages of Cultural Competence**

   This session describes the four stages of cultural competence, which are awareness, curiosity, learning, and participation. Participants reflect on the importance of cultural competency, and its effects in schools. Specifically, participants are asked to think about the cultural representation of their schools, the different ways cultures are celebrated in the school environment and the values associated with the celebrations.
Session 3 — Behaviors Leading to Greater Cultural Competence

Participants learn specific steps to increase cultural competence, such as the correct pronunciation of students’ names. Participants are introduced to the differences in cultural ethos. Participants also reflect on how specific actions may be perceived as offensive to certain cultures.

Session 4 — Where Do We Go From Here?

Participants reflect on steps they have taken to become more culturally competent since the last session, and share barriers they may have encountered. Participants also reflect on the cultures in their schools and ways to learn more about and participate in those cultures.


Arlington Public Schools


Arlington Public Schools’ cultural competence curriculum guide comprises five sections described below.

Section 1 – Cultural competency overview and rationale

The overview offers a foundation with common definitions to provide context for educators as they navigate the curriculum. Notably, the overview suggests that educators should embrace the ethics of critique, justice, and care as they teach students. To do so, teachers must recognize systemic oppression and discrimination, learn about and embrace diverse cultures, include multiple cultures in teaching, and understand any individual and general privileges.

Section 2 – Cultural competency models focused on recognizing oppression, responding to racism, and understanding privilege

Section 2 describes two cultural competency frameworks. Both frameworks require educators to reflect on themselves, institutions, and general society. Once educators become aware of racial, ethnic and cultural inequities, and situate themselves within the narrative, they are able to move to cultural competency. The section provides common definitions for race, ethnicity, culture, and identity, including explaining how each is socially constructed; explains differences in multiple types of racism, such as overt and covert; and articulates the role of power and privilege in oppression.

Section 3 – Racial identity models and culturally distinct groups

In the section 3, the authors discuss the importance for educators to understand racial identity development. Multiple racial identity models exist, and several common models are described in this section. In addition to racial identity, the authors describe the social context for various U.S. racial and ethnic groups, including African Americans, Native Americans, Latina/os, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and White Americans.

Section 4 – Cultural competency strategies

Section 4 offers specific strategies for educators to effectively work with diverse student populations. For example, the authors recommend incorporating the cultural reciprocity approach for which educators follow a four step model to establish mutually collaborative relationships between schools and families.
Section 5 – Culturally responsive teaching practices

The authors explain the importance of using culturally responsive practices in teaching. Several models are discussed with accompanying sample tools. For example, the authors highlight the importance of differentiated learning to help all students succeed.

In addition to the sections described above, the guidebook contains sample exercises for educators to use to assess their own cultural competency, as well as resources for educators to use in their classrooms.

State education agency examples

1. Culturally Responsive Education Becoming a Culturally Responsive Educator
   Connecticut State Board of Education

   Connecticut State Board of Education implemented culturally responsive education to help close the achievement gap between higher- and lower-income students, and between Anglo-White students and racial and ethnic minority students. The State Board of Education defined culturally responsive education as "a theory of teaching and learning that addresses the important role of knowing and understanding the culture of our students and using such knowledge to inform curriculum development and teaching methodologies."

   This handbook contains modules designed to help participants acquire cultural competence skills and gain an understanding of culturally responsive education and its effects on student achievement. The modules are described below.

   Module 1: An Historical Perspective

   The first module presents a historical timeline of civil rights events in American history. Events highlighted include the Post-Reconstruction error and its effect on African Americans, and the election of Barack Obama, the first African American president.

   Module 2: Defining the Need for Culturally Responsive Education

   This module presents facts on the increasing diversity of America.

   Module 3: Understanding and Working with Bias

   Participants are introduced to active listening, specifically as a means to better communicate and connect with diverse students.

   Module 4: Cultural Competence – Aspects of Culture, Global Skills

   The fourth module contains a table to highlight how cultural norms can be interpreted differently depending on the culture. This module also highlights competency skills, such as learning more about other cultures.
Module 5: Understanding Student Characteristics and Needs

In this module, the authors discuss ways to help teachers become more cognizant of their students’ learning styles.

Module 6: Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Teachers and Schools

This module explores the effects of culture on teacher and student interactions. This module also lists tips on working effectively in diverse classrooms and provides a checklist of culturally responsive education, such as having the curriculum reflect the diversity of students.

Module 7: Families as Partners in Education

The final module asks educators to reflect on ways schools recognize and respect the cultures of families.


This training curriculum was developed by professors at the College of William and Mary and the University of Virginia and pilot tested with faculty, administrators, and students at a number of historically black colleges and universities (HBCU), other institutions of higher education, and several local school systems in Virginia through the support of a School Improvement Grant. The toolkit includes sections on awareness competencies, knowledge competencies, and skills competencies, as well as how to differentiate instruction for students with disabilities who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Training activities are provided for each section of the toolkit, as well as training workshop agendas and materials for 1-day, 2-day, and 3-day workshops and a 12-week cultural competency training course.

3. Equity Toolkit for Administrators

Colorado Department of Education
https://www.cde.state.co.us/postsecondary/equitytoolkit

The Colorado Department of Education created this toolkit to support school and community leaders in their efforts to address bias, harassment, prejudice and discrimination in their school communities. Resources are provided to help schools work through the effects of a crisis as well as to support schools in creating intervention and maintenance plans for a more accepting culture. The toolkit includes assessments for administrators, teachers and students as well as training resources.

Higher education resources

1. Metropolitan Center for Urban Education. (2008), Culturally responsive classroom management strategies


The brief provides a description of Culturally Responsive Classroom Management (CRCM) Practice, a pedagogical approach for teachers to become aware of their biases and values, and the effects those
values have in the classroom. CRCM is designed to incorporate students’ cultural knowledge into teachers’ pedagogical approach.

The components of CRCM practices include teachers being aware of their cultural lenses and biases, increasing their knowledge of students’ cultures, understanding systemic social issues and inequities and their effects on the classroom, and creating a welcoming atmosphere for students of various cultures.

   https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/files/tides/Cultural%20Competence%20in%20Undergraduate%20STEM%20Teaching%20for%20AACU.pdf

Andrews’ PowerPoint begins with a definition of cultural competence and explains why cultural competence is important for educators in STEM education. To become culturally competent, Andrews calls for educators to self-reflect to better understand their social identity and location. Once educators understand their social identity and social location, it becomes easier to work through cultural differences to become culturally competent. To become culturally competent, educators must reject cultural blindness because culture matters. Andrews provides multiple frameworks for understanding the underrepresentation of specific racial, ethnic, and gender groups in STEM, including stereotype threat, critical race theory, and microaggressions. Drawing on these frameworks, Andrews offers educators several frameworks for inclusive teaching, such as culturally responsive teaching, culturally relevant teaching, critical multicultural education and teaching, and multicultural education.

Public and private association examples

1. Diversity Toolkit: Cultural Competence for Educators
   The National Education Association (NEA)
   http://www.nea.org/tools/30402.htm

NEA developed a toolkit for educators on how to become culturally competent to teach diverse learners. The toolkit offers strategies for teaching students of diverse social classes, languages, genders, races and ethnicities, and sexual orientations. The toolkit also has sections that conceptually breakdown cultural competency and social justice. In addition to the toolkit, the NEA website provides links to many other resources focused on diversity and cultural competency.

2. Spotlight on Cultural Proficiency
   Working Group for Educator Excellence

This newsletter is a series of articles on cultural proficiency and describes four tools for achieving cultural proficiency in schools, districts and organizations. The tools consist of the following:

- The Guiding Principles: Organizational policies and practices to achieve cultural proficiency
- The Continuum: Methods for responding to and interpreting cultural differences
- The Barriers: Highlight barriers to achieving cultural proficiency
- The Essential Elements: Standards for achieving cultural proficiency
The tools are designed for educators to reflect on their practice as it relates to cultural diversity. Additionally, the tools help teachers examine the practices of the school and the district to determine their effect on students and to identify opportunities for change.

3. National Equity Project

http://nationalequityproject.org/

The National Equity Project partners with schools, districts, nonprofits and other community organizations to build the culture, conditions and competencies for excellence and equity. The organization offers a range of customized coaching and consulting services including:

- Teaching with a Cultural Eye, which provides teachers and instructional leaders with support to address instructional equity issues;
- Coaching for Equity, which provides one-to-one support for leaders;
- Leadership and Team Development, which helps teams of leaders examine their practice related to leadership for equity;
- Strategy Development and Implementation Support, using a design approach to create systemic change that guides leaders to diagnose, design, develop and demonstrate a solution or innovation;
- Process Design and Facilitation, to help groups of 6–150 people identify and address conditions that perpetuate inequity; and
- Professional Learning and Development, including multiday institutes and one-day seminars customized to meet the needs of organizations.


A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center

http://www.tolerance.org/seminar/critical-practices-anti-bias-education

This free, online professional development seminar consists of four 1-hour modules designed to help teachers implement culturally responsive practices. The first link above leads to a guide for the seminars. The second link leads to four modules, which focus on the following topics: instruction, classroom culture, family and community engagement and teacher leadership. Modules include videos and structured activities to help educators apply the concepts to their own classrooms. The seminar can be completed independently or in a group.

5. Training for Racial Equity and Inclusion: A Guide to Selected Programs


https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/rcc/training.pdf

This report reviews and compares 10 training programs for racial equity and inclusion: People’s Institute for Survival and Beyond, the National Coalition Building Institute, Visions, World of Difference Institute, Crossroads Ministry, Everyday Democracy, Hope in the Cities, Dismantling Racism Institute, Challenging White Supremacy Workshop, and White People Working on Racism. The guide is intended to help stakeholders select program approaches that best meet their needs and goals. It examines programs’ underlying theories of practice and change, the training methods they use and why, program goals and intended outcomes, and program services and capacities. Summaries of each of the 10 programs are provided, as well as a discussion of the similarities and differences across programs.
6. National SEED Project
   http://www.nationalseedproject.org/

The National SEED Project aims to improve equity and diversity by training individuals to facilitate ongoing seminars in their own organizations and communities. New leaders attend a 7-day New Leaders’ Week during the summer to prepare them to lead monthly SEED seminars at their school or organization throughout the year. Experienced leaders can attend ReSEED, a 3-day program to help them recharge their practice.

7. A Classroom of Difference Program
   Anti-Defamation League’s

A CLASSROOM OF DIFFERENCE provides antibias training programs for educators, administrators, youth and families in pre-K through 12th grade school communities. Training focuses on developing inclusiveness and respectful learning environments by addressing issues of bias and bullying. The professional development program includes workshops that provide effective strategies to address bias, name-calling and bullying. The program includes face-to-face, online, and interdisciplinary, standards-based, antibias materials that can be integrated into existing curriculum. Anti-Defamation League also has programs to prepare middle and high school students to work with their peers on confronting bias. See the following links for more information:

   Curriculum Resources
   Anti-Bias Study Guide
   Bullying and Cyberbullying Workshops
   Peer Training
   Peer Leadership
   Resources for Youth

Book study resources


In Subtractive Schooling, Valenzuela demonstrates how some U.S. schools intentionally and unintentionally devalue the culture of some students, which consequently subtracts from students’ learning. She argues that schools must create additive models that value students’ cultures and incorporate the cultures into the daily learning and operations of the schools. Valenzuela’s subtractive concept is used by many researchers who study the experiences and outcomes of English learners.

2. Ferguson, A. (2000), Bad boys: Public schools in the making of Black masculinity
   https://www.amazon.com/Bad-Boys-Schools-Masculinity-Violence/dp/0472088491

Using qualitative data, Ferguson describes how public schools often participate in the policing of Black males. She argues that schools and educators knowingly and unknowingly label Black boys as criminal at
young ages. The labeling serves to track Black boys into classes for students who likely will have drop out of high school, working class jobs, or even go to prison.


Singleton and Linton provide school leaders with the opportunity to examine the student achievement gap through the lens of race. Educators engage in “courageous conversations” through a series of personal and team-based reflective and interactive activities that promote daily practices and principles leading to educator equity for all students. The book consists of three parts, which represent “the three characteristics of antiracist leadership: Passion, Practice, and Persistence.” The first part of the book explores the effects of race on learning, the second part explores tools and resources to engage in dialogues on races, and the final part presents leadership practices to eliminate racial achievement gaps.


Ladson-Billings profiles teachers who demonstrate effective, culturally relevant teaching for African American students. The book provides details from the author’s classroom observations, interviews, and community engagement experiences that led to the development of Ladson-Billings’ dimensions of culturally relevant pedagogy. The book provides models of effective strategies and practices teachers can adapt to improve the academic achievement of low-income and racial and ethnic minority students.

   https://www.amazon.com/Culturally-Proficient-Instruction-Guide-People/dp/1412988144

This book provides tools, resources, suggested activities and vignettes to support the importance of educators engaging in a reflective process to better understand the benefits of culturally proficient instruction. The premise of this book is that all children can learn and the importance of finding effective methods to ensure the success of all students. Through this book, readers reflect on their thoughts and attitudes about themselves and their learners, and explore what it means to be a culturally proficient educator.

   https://www.amazon.com/Through-Cracks-Carolyn-Sollman/dp/0871928779

This children’s story for adults illustrates the detriments of ineffective teaching and schooling. After journeying through the main character’s narration of how students become disengaged, bored, and frustrated in their troubled school systems, adult readers discover some of the ways innovative instructional and leadership practices can effectively transform schools into engaging, safe and supportive environments for students.