Integrating Culture and Diversity into Curriculum

Keith R. Barnes, Executive Director
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
Spring 2017 Professional Development Week
Tuesday, January 10, 2017
Presentation Goals

- Diversity In-depth
- Definition for Cultural Competence
- Origins of Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Exercise on Assessing Efforts to Create a Culturally Responsive Curriculum
- Review of Best Practices for Creating and Assessing Culturally Responsive Curriculum
My Professional Definition for Diversity

**Diversity:** Individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations).

*(Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2016)*

**Group and social differences (cultural groups)** are manifested in various forms among our administration, faculty, staff, and students - including (but not limited to) differences of gender, sex, race, religion, age, nationality, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, socio-economic status, and ability.
The Diversity Wheel

Loden and Rosener (1991)

CAN Website (2015)
Diversity consist of...

- Cultural Identity
- Cultural Groups
- Cultural Norms
- Lived Experiences
- World Views
Three Key Points to Consider

- It is your responsibility to define your own cultural identity.
- You must display authenticity when defining your cultural identity.
- We all possess multiple identities that shape who we are.
Cultural Components Interact

We should remember that cultural components interact. An individual has an ethnicity, a nationality, a sex, any many other components of culture. When we focus only on one of these (e.g., ethnicity) without nothing how the one element interacts with the others, we are missing out on the big picture. **Human identity is complex, and focusing on only one element ignores that complexity**

(Gurung, 2009, p. 14).
Cultural competence is having an awareness of one’s own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families. It is the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each student unique, while celebrating the between-group variations that make our country a tapestry. This understanding informs and expands teaching practices in the culturally competent educator’s classroom.

(National Education Association, 2015)
Defining Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is an educational reform that strives to increase the engagement and motivation of students of color who historically have been both unsuccessful academically and socially alienated from their public schools.

(Vavrus, 2008, p. 49.)
Historical and Theoretical Foundations of Culturally Responsive Teaching

- Civil Rights Movement
- Multicultural Education
- Ongoing Inequity in Academic Student Achievement
- Challenging the Cultural Deprivation Explanation
- John Dewey’s Democratic Ideal
- Low-Status Students

(Gay, 2010; Vavrus, 2008)
Tenets for Culturally Responsive Teaching

- Inclusive and welcoming classroom
- Student-centered approach
- Equity Pedagogy
- Actively engaging student learning
- Connection between school norms and students’ lived experiences
- Learning-centered pedagogy
- Critical Pedagogy Foundations (Identifying Dominant Practices and Praxis Concept)
- Instructor Cultural Competence

(Vavrus, 2008; Gay, 2010)
Descriptive Characteristics

Cultural responsive teaching is…

- Validating
- Comprehensive
- Multidimensional
- Empowering
- Transformational
- Emancipatory

(Gay, 2010)
Gingsberg and Wlodkowski’s (2009) Model

- **Establish inclusion.** Create an environment in which learners and teachers feel comfortable, respected and connected to one another.

- **Develop attitude.** Instructors develop practices that have personal relevance, underscoring volition or choice.

- **Enhance meaning.** Instructors develop practices and experiences that include a student’s values.

- **Engender competence.** Instructors develop practices in which the student realizes they are learning something of values to themselves and to their community.

(Childers, 2016)
Four Critical Aspects of Culturally Responsive Teaching

- Caring
  “Caring teachers expect (highly), relate (genuinely), and facilitate (relentlessly).”
- Communication
  (Cultural Linguistics)
- *Curriculum
- Instruction
  (Understanding Various Student Learning Styles)

(Gay, 2010)
What Do I Consider When Adopting Culturally Responsive Teaching?

- **Relationships**
  - Learn about your students’ individual cultures.
  - Adapt your teaching to include attitudes and perspectives from all students.
  - Develop a connection with the most challenging students.

- **Curriculum**
  - Use various cultural and student-centered stories and examples.
  - Incorporate relatable aspects of various cultures and students’ lives.

- **Delivery**
  - Establish an interactive dialogue to engage all students.
  - Continually interact with students and provide frequent feedback.
  - Vary your instructional methods.

(Richardson, 2017)
The Importance of Student Relevance and Participation in Curriculum Decision-Making

Because of the dialectic relationship between knowledge and the knower, interest and motivation, relevance and mastery, Native Americans, Latino [Hispanic] Americans, African-Americans, and Asian [and Pacific Islander] Americans [and other diverse populations] must be seen as co-originators, co-designers, and co-directors (along with the professional educators) of their education. If the “creator, producer, and director” roles of students of color are circumscribed and they are seen as only “consumers,” then their levels of learning will also be restricted.

(Gay, 2010, p. 127)
The Importance of Student Relevance and Participation in Curriculum Decision-Making

Rather, culturally relevant curriculum content should be chosen and delivered in ways that are meaningful to the students for whom it is intended. In some instances, this means validating their personal experiences and cultural heritages; in others, it means teaching content entirely new to ethnically and culturally diverse students but in ways that make it easy for them to comprehend.

(Gay, 2010, p. 127)
Implementing Curriculum Changes

There are different curricular models emerging as campuses diversify the curriculum.

- Diversity Requirement
- Diversity Content
- Community Service Projects
- General Education Courses
- Professional Field Requirements

(Sciame-Giesecke, Roden, and Parkison, 2009)
Six Key Observations

- Curriculum content is crucial to academic performance.
- Textbooks are the most common source of curriculum content.
- Meaningful curriculum content improves learning.
- Includes information about the histories, cultures, contributions, experiences, perspectives, and issues of their respective ethnic groups.
- Derived from various sources, many of which exists outside the normal boundaries of schooling.
- There are many different kinds of curricula.

(Gay, 2010, 128)
Importance Sources of Curriculum Content for Culturally Responsive Teaching

- Textbooks
- Standards and Testing
- Literary and Trade Books
- Mass Media

(Gay, 2010)
Textbooks

- The most prominent teaching tool.
- Students consider its authority to be incontestable.
- Courses without textbooks are viewed with some contempt.
- Generally controlled by the dominant groups/reflect the dominant culture.
- Some progress in making textbooks culturally relevant, but problems still remain.
- Most attention given to the African-American Experience.
- Rather bland, conservative, conformist, and safe.
- Contentious issues are avoided or sanitized.
- Promotes harmonious racial relations that is too often used as a “weapon of deculturalization”.
- Gender and social-class disparities prevail.
Textbooks

- Very little systematic empirical research is currently available that measures the effect that these textbooks have on student achievement.
- Evidence is provided via personal stories.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=okcfKaC87r4
Standards, Testing, and Diversity

- **Content standards** – indicate what students are supposed to know and understand.
- **Performance standards** – indicate what students should be able to do.
- **Standardization** – using the same measures for all students to determine their mastery of content and performance standards.
- The push for more standardization has rivaled the quest for cultural inclusion.
- “There is no one right curriculum design, teaching style, and assessment procedure for all students” (p. 141).
- A variety of approaches is key with Culturally Responsive Teaching.
Supplementary instructional materials, such as picture books, biographies, and autobiographies, short stories, novels, and song lyrics, written by ethnic authors about ethnic groups.

Teachers need to know how to assess the cultural accuracy and authenticity of the materials.

Some improvements have been made, but some biases persist in child and adolescent literature.

Interpretative and reflective engagement is key.

Example: Loyola University Chicago Curriculum Collection at Lewis Library.

http://libguides.luc.edu/c.php?g=49784&p=320661
Though not all the content is desirable, the influence that it has on student learning cannot be denied.

“The programs students view include a wide range of cartoons, movies, music videos, news reports, documentaries, prime-time series, syndicated “family classics,” and an avalanche of advertisements” (p. 148).

Inaccuracies still exist across cultural groups

Oftentimes leads to mandated “style shifting” or altering behaviors and expectations.

The inappropriate images of ethnic groups in society can negatively impact student academic performance.

“Numerical ethnic representations in media do not ensure content quality. Ethnic groups may appear to be validated while simultaneously being subtly stereotyped” (p. 154).

Example: Tokens – A Diversity in Films PSA
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxgzDL9us3c
Improving Culturally Diverse Curriculum Content

- **More cultural content is needed** in all school curricula about all ethnic groups of color.
- Educators should be diligent in ensuring that curriculum content about ethnically diverse groups is **accurate, authentic, and comprehensive**.
- Culturally responsive curriculum content should also **deal simultaneously with concepts, principles, and ideas generalizable across ethnic groups**...
- This information needs to be capable of facilitating many different kinds of learning...No single source is capable of doing all of this alone. Therefore, curriculum designers should always **use a variety of resources from different genres and disciplines** including textbooks, literature, mass media, music, personal experiences, and social science research.

(Gay, 2010)
Improving Culturally Diverse Curriculum Content

- Students should learn how to conduct ideological and content analysis of various sources of curriculum content about ethnic and cultural diversity.

- Teachers and students should conduct their own research on how textbooks, mass [and social] media, trade books, and other curriculum content sources affect knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors toward ethnic and cultural diversity and mastery of various academic skills.

- Finally, students and teachers should become scholars of ethnic and cultural diversity, and generate their own curriculum content.

(Gay, 2010)
Debunking these kinds of myths and other ethnic biases in mass [and social] media should be a central feature of culturally responsive teaching. It is also important for students and teachers to understand that curriculum content is not just the information taught in schools. The experiences students have outside of school such as those provided by all forms of mass [and social] media are also powerful influences on learning.

(Gay, 2010, p. 153)
[The researchers] utilized the Marchesani and Adams (1992) multicultural teaching model, which was adapted from Jackson (1988) as a framework for [their] analysis. The model contains four dimensions of the dynamics of diversity in teaching-learning process: faculty, teaching methods, course content, and students.

This study was intended as an initial investigation to shed light on what faculty members are actually doing in their classroom to prepare students to live and work in a diverse world.

(Sciame-Giesecke, Roden, and Parkison, 2009)
Infusing Diversity Into the Curriculum Study

- Faculty members were most likely to include diversity elements through their course content…
- Overall, almost half of the faculty (49%) addressed pedagogical strategies in their annual reports.
- It is unfortunate that only a minority of faculty included reflective comments about understanding themselves.
- Only 18% of the faculty members reported that they reflected on student diversity issues in their classrooms.

(Sciame-Giesecke, Roden, and Parkison, 2009)
Infusing Diversity Into the Curriculum Study

Recommendations:

- Conduct surveys and interviews to validate findings.
- Initiate formative measures beyond annual report.
- Aggregate and share campus data to develop workshops on thematic challenges throughout the institution.
- Promote the idea that cultural diversity curriculum transformation is a part of effective curriculum development and an important component of faculty development.
- Create more effective methods for faculty to learn how to assess their efforts.

(Sciame-Giesecke, Roden, and Parkison, 2009)
Key Guidelines for Incorporating Culture into the Curriculum

- Make it explicit
- Make it safe
- Model appropriate behavior
- Make it relevant
- Make it credible
- Make it active and experiential
- Make it count

(Gurung, 2009)
A Caution on Creating Equitable and Open Space

Be weary of how you set up guidelines (ground rules) for the Social Justice Education experience.

“Having used such guidelines ourselves, we have come to believe that rather than creating an equitable and open space, they actually increase unequal power relations in the classroom. They do so through an embedded assumption that it is possible to create a space that is experienced by all students as respectful, validating, and protective, regardless of their social locations” (Sensoy and DiAngelo, 2014, p. 2).
“We need to think seriously about why multicultural educators have not been more successful in conveying to teachers, journalists, and the general public the idea that multicultural education is concerned not only with students of color and linguistically diverse students but also with White mainstream students” (Banks, 2002, p. 24).