

## Culturally Responsive Practices in Four Critical Levels – Overview

The following document frames current research around culturally responsive education into four quadrants that represent practices at the following critical levels: (1) culturally responsive schools, (2) culturally responsive leadership, (3) culturally responsive educators, and (4) culturally responsive pedagogy.

These four leverage points represent components of the educational ecosystem that can be transformed by culturally responsive practices to better serve marginalized students of color. Defining what culturally responsive practices look like in these four levels also aids in identifying data points, situating student outcomes through an equity lens supported by culturally responsive pedagogies, identifying capacity building needs, and creating spaces for continuous community input and support. Simply, framing leverage points as critical levels gives educational stakeholders a way quantify steps for to successfully implementing culturally responsive practices.

### Culturally Responsive Schools

Culturally responsive schools address fundamental equity concerns by holding high expectations for students and providing the highest levels of support for all students to succeed. Success in a culturally responsive school is defined by preparation for college and career readiness in an environment that is supportive, is asset-conscious and fosters positive cultural identity. The school also is responsible for placing the histories of all students and families in the context of academic awareness of the contributions, struggles and individual experiences of racial/ethnic groups formerly underrepresented in curriculum and historical narratives.

Ultimately, the culturally responsive school seeks the highest levels of achievement in an environment that transforms education to recognize that the history, struggles, achievements and contributions of the racially underrepresented populations it serves are fundamental to economic progress, cultural heritage and social dynamics of this country.

### Culturally Responsive Leadership

The culturally responsive school leader creates policies, sets and monitors expectations, and coaches faculty to facilitate successful implementation of culturally responsive instruction. This leader also sets standards and expectations for high academic success regardless of perceived performance abilities. This means that the campus leader creates a climate free from implicit biases toward racial/ethnic groups. This leader also centers marginalized families and communities as important in decision making, solution-seeking and key to cultural histories in the community's past.

A culturally responsive leader does not simply provide a better multicultural education but transforms the educational environment where all students succeed and their identities are seen integral to state's and nation's history, progress and economic future.

### Culturally Responsive Educators

Educators are the first faces students see from the moment they walk into an early childhood setting to the moment they graduate. It is the experiences that educators provide that have the most impact on students and ultimately define the nature of that relationship. And in the case of students of color these experiences must be provided by educators who understand the entirety of students' experiences. The research on what educators must provide and what they must understand has grown over the past 30 years. The culturally responsive educator moves curriculum, pedagogy and practices forward from the least effective multicultural practices of the past to practices that center democratic principles and activist practices in the context of marginalized experiences and struggles.

### Culturally responsive Pedagogy

In the spirit of expanding the definition of best teaching practices and pedagogy, this quadrant is based on the "Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol" (Powell, et al., 2017). CRIOP provides a framework for identifying observable behaviors of a culturally responsive education. It is important to note that in an of themselves many of the practices described in the CRIOP have the possibility of impacting educational practices only if they are situated in the racial and ethnic context of students lived experiences. Instructors must explicitly understand that these practices are responses to systemic racism, implicit and explicit biases and power dynamics of underrepresented and oppressed groups. IDRA recommends the following CRIOP indicators found in the quadrant: Classroom Relationships, Family Collaboration, Instructional Practices and Curriculum Practices.

Framing of these quadrants was informed by IDRA's literature review on culturally responsive practices for the AAHEC.

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## Culturally Responsive Practices in Four Critical Levels – High Level View

### Culturally Responsive Schools

- i** The culturally responsive school’s goals are:
1. Universal access and support to college preparatory classes for all students.
  2. Universal access to culturally relevant pedagogy that foments positive cultural identities.
  3. Access to an educational environment that is free from implicit and explicit racial/ethnic and gender biases as evidenced by high performance of marginalized students and low rates of exclusionary discipline for all students.

### Culturally Responsive Leadership

- i** The culturally responsive leader’s responsibilities and goals are:
1. Full implementation of culturally responsive practices.
  2. High percentage of families of marginalized students included in educational decisions and policies beyond tradition parent engagement.
  3. High rates in recruiting, hiring and retaining of teachers of color who are versed in culturally responsive pedagogy.

### Culturally Responsive Educators

- i** The culturally responsive educator understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy includes:
1. An understanding and awareness of the cultural implementation continuum – from the least effective, inclusive, but socially isolating methods, to transformative approaches.
  2. Cultural dimensions: Internal, Community, Social, Institutional.
  3. A continuous critical reflection, using critical race theory concepts, to interrupt all forms of micro inequalities to ensure safe, responsive and inclusive learning environments, and positive student outcomes.

### Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

- i** Culturally responsive pedagogy must be observable and measurable in the following areas Quadrant based as featured in the “Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol” (CRIOP) (Powell, et al., 2017):
1. Classroom Relationships
  2. Family Collaboration
  3. Instructional Practices
  4. Curriculum Practices

# Culturally Responsive Practices in Four Critical Levels – Indicators and Evidence

## Culturally Responsive Schools

“A culturally responsive school provides college and career readiness in an environment that is academically supportive, is asset-conscious and fosters positive cultural identity.”

– Dr. Paula Johnson, IDRA EAC-South

## Culturally Responsive Leadership

“The culturally responsive campus leader sets standards and expectations for high academic success regardless of perceived performance abilities. This means that he or she leads the school in creating an academic environment free from implicit bias toward underrepresented racial/ethnic groups.”

– Dr. Paula Johnson, IDRA EAC-South



### Universal Campus Goals

The culturally responsive school’s goals are the following.

1. Universal access to a safe and secure campus culture where marginalized students are safe from the following.
  - Implicit and explicit biases in educators.
  - Implicit and explicit biases in all school staff (clerical, transportation, cafeteria, custodial).
  - Racially motivated incidences involving any school employee from clerical to leadership.
  - Negative family and community relationships with school employees.
  - Microaggressions.
2. Safe and secure campus climate must be quantified through surveys and/or yearly focus groups collected by outside partners. These issues are codified in campus documents and addressed through transparent incident reporting, professional development, accountable leadership and appropriate resolution practices (e.g., restorative justice).
3. Access and support to rigorous college preparatory classes for *all* students as evidenced by (a) high college and career readiness rates; (b) high completion rates; and (c) access to appropriate and high supports for success in college and career readiness. Examples of classes include dual credit, AP/IB, and early college high schools.
4. Universal access to culturally relevant pedagogy that foment positive cultural identities.
5. Access to an educational environment that is free from implicit and explicit racial/ethnic and gender biases as evidenced by high performance of marginalized students and low exclusionary discipline rates for all students.
6. High student achievement rates in state accountability (the most basic outcome).



### Leadership Goals

1. Full implementation of culturally responsive practices as evidenced by:
  - Percentage of *all* leadership trained in culturally responsive practices (i.e., board members, superintendents, principals, assistant principals, central office, post-secondary deans of school of education and university presidents)
  - Explicit communication to *all* staff of equity vision, practices and indicators.
  - Percentage of instructional coaches trained in culturally responsive practices.
  - Percentage of teachers trained in culturally responsive practices.
  - Teacher beliefs that *all* students are capable of successful college and career readiness in a manner that is not deficit based nor viewed through implicit biases.
  - Culturally relative practices monitored as part of teacher evaluations.
  - Teacher inclusion of culturally responsive pedagogy that speaks to student’s history, contributions and community struggles.
  - Support for teachers to implement culturally responsive practices.
  - Full communication with *all* families of equity expectations, culturally responsive practices, procedures for reporting incidents and disciplinary/restorative measures for staff.
2. Families and caregivers of marginalized students have access to:
  - Decisions surrounding culturally responsive pedagogy.
  - Lesson planning and lesson inclusion concerning community. contributions to historical and current events.
  - Surveys concerning faculty and staff biases.
3. Ensuring high rates in recruiting, hiring and retaining of teachers of color and ensuring high rates of teachers who are versed in culturally responsive pedagogy as evidenced by:
  - Collaborative recruitment efforts with teacher programs across the state that includes and highlights historically Black colleges and universities.
  - Mentoring practices for new recruits in culturally responsive pedagogy.
  - Support for new teachers in establishing positive community relationships.
  - Maintaining a positive, asset-based, bias-free culture on campus toward all teachers and students

## Culturally Responsive Educators

“Experiences educators provide have the most impact on students and ultimately define the nature of that relationship. And in the case of students of color those experience must be provided by educators who understand the entirety of our students’ experiences.”

– Dr. Paula Johnson, IDRA EAC-South

## Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

“Culturally responsive pedagogy must be transformative and move beyond the multicultural practices of inclusion. Culturally responsive pedagogy must build leadership and pedagogical practices by thorough examinations of power dynamics and privilege.

– Dr. Paula Johnson, IDRA EAC-South

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### Basic Understanding

Educators must have a basic Understanding of traditional multicultural approaches and culturally responsive practices from least to most effective.

- **Contributions Approach:** “Colloquially, this is known as the ‘heroes and holidays’ approach Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks during Black History Month” (Stairs, et al., 2012).
- **Additive Approach:** This approach expands by creating units concerning African American figures, scientists or civil rights activists. For students of color, the practice of isolating figures and creating lesson or units “reinforces the notion... that ethnic minorities are not integral parts of mainstream U.S. society” (Banks & Banks, 2012).
- **Transformation Approach:** This approach takes multiple events, issues, narratives or concepts and asks students to examine perspectives from different identities.
- **Social Action Approach:** Here, students “acquire the knowledge and commitments needed to make reflective decisions and to take personal, social and civic action to promote democracy and democratic living” (Banks & Banks, 2012).

Educators must understand the following critical race theory concepts that affect student outcomes.

- Educators must challenge their own sense of privilege.
- Educators can only understand the need for high support by examining their own privilege and ideas of a *simplistic meritocracy*.
- Educators must have high expectations for all students.
- Educators must explicitly discuss issues of power and privilege in the classroom.
- Educators help students make connections between their community, national and global identities.
- Educators see teaching as “pulling knowledge out” therefore validating common heritage.
- Educators must demonstrate an understanding of students’ cultural background.

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### Observable Pedagogies

Culturally responsive pedagogy must have the following observable practices across all content areas at all grade levels.

#### Classroom Relationships

- The teacher demonstrates an ethic of care (e.g., equitable relationships, bonding).
- The teacher communicates high expectations for all students.
- The teacher creates a learning atmosphere that engenders respect for one another and toward diverse populations.
- Students work together productively.

#### Family and Community Collaboration

Collaborations must reflect genuine authentic recognition of how privilege and power has historically affected school/family dynamics.

- The teacher establishes genuine partnerships (equitable relationships) with family/caregivers.
- The teacher reaches out to meet families in positive, non-traditional ways.
- The teacher encourages family/caregiver’s involvement.
- The teacher intentionally learns about families’ and communities’ linguistic and cultural knowledge and expertise to support student learning.

#### Instructional Practices

Teacher’s instructional practices must reflect learnings concerning power and privilege.

- Instruction is contextualized in students’ lives, experiences and abilities.
- Students engage in active, hands-on, meaningful skills-based learning tasks, including inquiry-based and place-based learning.
- The teacher focuses on developing students’ academic language.
- The teacher uses instructional techniques that scaffold student learning.
- The teacher focuses on building assets instead of utilizing deficit thinking.

#### Curriculum and Assessment Practices

- The curriculum and planned learning experiences provide opportunities for the inclusion of issues important to the classroom, school and community, including place-based learning.
- The curriculum and planned learning experiences incorporate opportunities to study dynamics of power and privilege in order to confront and dispel negative stereotypes and bias.
- The curriculum and planned learning experiences integrate and provide opportunities for the expression of diverse perspectives.