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ABSTRACT
                The handbook presents guidelines for cross-cultural
understanding and communication to assist teachers in culturally and
linguistically diverse classes. The guidelines are presented in the form of
suggestions in ten areas: (1) become familiar with basic concepts in
anthropology, sociology, and related disciplines, and use the knowledge to
build an intellectual framework for organizing and interpreting cultural
information; (2) study the culture and history of ethnic groups represented
in the school and community; (3) understand differences between the cultures
of the school and home and bridge the distance by building on student
strengths; (4) learn to recognize and remedy equity problems; (5) realize how
one's own perceptions, thoughts, and behavior are conditioned by cultural
context, and remain positively but critically identified within one's own
cultural group; (6) approach other cultures with interest, respect, and a
sense of shared humanity; (7) hold the belief that students from every
cultural group within the school can succeed academically; (8) do not ask
that students alienate themselves from their own cultural groups to satisfy
school expectations; (9) improve intercultural communication and conflict
resolution skills; and (10) develop a repertoire of instructional approaches
to use in meeting varied student needs. (MSE)

Building
Cross-Cultural
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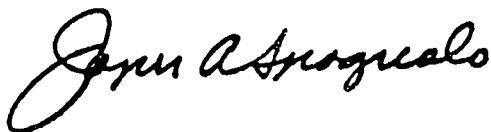### Educational Equity Services

Michael W. Skarr
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State Superintendent

Foreword

Building Cross-Cultural Competence is offered as an essay, in the first sense of that word, as one attempt to answer some important and timely questions related to teacher education and evaluation, not as a definitive statement on any of those issues. It is hoped that the ideas and suggestions contained in this handbook will stimulate further thought, discussion and action at the local level. To further that aim, a set of discussion questions and other staff development activities designed for use with this publication will be available from our office early in the 1995-96 school year.

This publication was researched and written by Michael Mangan of the Illinois State Board of Education's Educational Equity Services Section. It is one of a series of such equity resources being produced by the EES Section as part of a project funded under Title IV of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

For information about this publication, the related training program and other materials and services available from the Educational Equity Services Section, please contact Patricia Poole, Manager, Educational Equity Services, Illinois State Board of Education, 100 West Randolph Street, Suite 14-300, Chicago, Illinois 60601. Telephone: 312/814-3226.

Joseph A. Spagnolo
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Introduction

"Fifty ... meeting together, all strangers, are not acquainted with each other's language, ideas, views, designs. They are therefore (suspicious) of each other— fearful, timid, skittish. . . . Here is a diversity of religions, educations, manners, interests, such as it would seem impossible to unite in one plan of conduct. " *

These lines might plausibly describe a group of students on the first day of school in a contemporary United States city. In fact, they are John Adams' description of the delegates to the Continental Congress, who were eventually united in the plan of declaring their independence from England. Uniting diverse people under a shared set of beliefs, values and goals has been a central concern throughout the history of the United States, even if one looks back to a time when most of those involved in the process were immigrants from a relatively limited area in the northern part of western Europe. Since their establishment in the 19th century, our public schools have played a central role in the continuing accomplishment of this purpose on a gradually more inclusive basis.

What distinguishes the challenges confronting our schools today from those they have faced in the past is not so much that they must serve a very diverse student population, but that they must serve these students in a different way than they have in the past. Illinois and other states have made commitments, not only to substantially improve the general quality of student performance, but also to reduce differences in educational outcomes for the racial and ethnic groups represented in their schools. There is also a growing consensus that students should not be required to alienate themselves from their cultural groups in order to achieve these academic goals or to prepare for the responsibilities of citizenship in the larger community.

This commitment to stronger forms of educational equity and cultural pluralism requires a corresponding redefinition of teacher competence. We have coined the term **cross-cultural competence** to express this new set of expectations. It is understood as **the ability to promote high levels of academic performance, not only among members of the dominant group, but among every cultural group within a school and to do so in a way that affirms the value of each culture, both to its own members and to the community as a whole.**

The ten suggestions which follow are an attempt to define, in very broad terms, the kinds of knowledge, attitudes and skills required to become a cross-culturally competent teacher. Each is accompanied by a brief essay and recommended sources for further study.

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*   John Adams as cited in Gary Wills, *Inventing America: Jefferson's Declaration of Independence* (New York: Vintage, 1979), p.34.

Cultural Theory

1. Become familiar with basic concepts in anthropology, sociology and related disciplines. Use this knowledge to build an intellectual framework for organizing and interpreting cultural information.

Acquiring cultural knowledge and understanding is a life-long process, built on a balance between formal study and direct experience. Professional competence for someone working in a multicultural classroom does not require an advanced degree in anthropology or sociology. But a solid grasp of a few basic social science concepts is needed if the teacher is to make sense of a potentially overwhelming body of information. A logical starting point is the concept of "culture" itself.

Culture is the way of living and looking at life shared by a group's members.
It includes

> **language** - a system for symbolic communication;
>
> **technology** - methods for controlling the environment to meet material needs and achieve other practical goals;
>
> **beliefs** - statements about reality accepted as true;
>
> **values** - general assumptions about what is good or bad;
>
> **norms** - specific standards of acceptable behavior. (Doob, 1985, pp. 52-77)

This definition suggests that culture is more than just a people's "tools and rules," more than the material objects they make and use or the ways in which they behave. Because all cultural traits are learned, not innate, the fundamental cultural activity is symbolic interaction. Most simply stated, culture is communication (Hall, 1977). To understand cultural life as symbolic activity is to realize that those who have been socialized within the same culture are linked together by a shared set of meanings, a common way of perceiving and interpreting the world (Geertz, 1973). It is for this reason that more ambiguity or uncertainty is experienced in interactions between members of different cultural groups. They are less certain what is expected of each other in a given situation and less able to interpret and predict each other's behavior.

Cultural systems are adaptive. They permit the survival of a group under the limitations of the circumstances in which it finds itself, by providing its members with ready-made answers to three universal human problems:

> **meeting biological needs,**
>
> **adjusting to life with other people,**
>
> **achieving personal integration and self-realization.** (Kluckhohn, 1970)

A group's culture should not, therefore, be confused with the economic or social problems it may be experiencing (Valentine, 1968). Although some such problems can be explained by the persistence of cultural traits which are maladaptive under present circumstances, a cultural system as a whole is not a set of problems or pathologies, but rather a set of answers to problems.

Even this brief introduction to cultural theory suggests the basis for an informed approach to the processing of cultural information. In trying to understand the actions or ideas of a cultural group, two questions are unavoidable:

1. **How would a member of the group describe and explain this action or idea? What would it mean to him or her?**

2. **In what way, if any, is this action or idea an adaptive response to circumstances faced by the group? What need does it address?**

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Cultural Description

2. Study the culture and history of the ethnic groups represented in your school and community, beginning with your own group.

Cultures are dynamic. They change over time and are modified by contact with other groups. This is one reason local enclaves of a cultural group may differ in many important ways from the descriptions found in published studies of the group. Such reading is a good initial source of general information, but should be supplemented with locally conducted ethnographies and local histories. Whether or not studies of this kind have already been produced in your community, there is real value in engaging in such work within the school.

School staff benefit from these activities by acquiring information which can be used for local curriculum development and as a source of qualitative data for school improvement planning. The participation of students in recording oral histories; interviewing family, friends and other community members; and producing personal narratives with a cultural focus can not only advance their learning in the language arts and social sciences, but also provide valuable insights not normally available to adult members of the school community.

Wilma Longstreet (1978) has suggested some very practical methods for teachers with no formal training in anthropology to use in conducting ethnographic "action research" in their schools. She describes a process for observing and recording patterns of student behavior, organizing the information under five categories:

verbal communication style;

non-verbal communication style;

orientation modes (bodily posture, physical orientation in space, temporal orientation, attention patterns);

social value patterns (patterns of social interaction, desire and avoidance);

intellectual modes (favored contexts and methods of learning).

Ethnographic research outside the context of the school can explore such areas as family structure and organization; child naming and rearing practices; relations between age and gender groups; and attitudes toward education, work, wealth, rank, and power. David Hackett Fisher (1989) has identified 24 such categories of "folkways" which can be used in creating an ethnic profile for any period in a group's history.

Even more important than learning to collect and organize such information is learning to use it properly. Inevitably, some generalizations will be made about cultural groups, but if these are to be of any value in interpreting or predicting behavior, several tests must be met:

1. **The generalization should be based on reliable empirical evidence from more than one source, both inside and outside the group.**

2. **Global, context-free depictions of group character or personality are of no practical use and doubtful validity.** Reliable and useful generalizations are as specific as possible about the kinds of situations to which they apply, including the physical and temporal setting and the age, gender. status. role and intentions of the participants.

3. **Cultural factors are not the sole determinants of group or individual behavior.** Cultural generalizations should be offered as tentative predictions of what some, but not all, members of a group are likely to do or think in a given situation.

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Multicultural Education

3. Understand how differences between the culture of the school and the culture of the home can place some students at a relative disadvantage in school. Learn to bridge this cultural distance by building on existing student strengths.

There are several risks in stating that differences between the culture of the home and the culture of the school are one key to explaining group differences in educational outcomes. The first is that references to "culturally different" families are often read as "culturally deficient" or "culturally defective." Deviations from the culture of the dominant group are understood as absolute deficits or pathologies, rather than as adaptations to a different set of problems than those faced by the dominant group. The ultimate conclusion of this line of reasoning is to blame students and their parents for their lower achievement levels and to see the loss of the home culture and assimilation to white, middle class norms as the only path to school success (Baratz & Baratz, 1970).

A second risk is that a "cultural differences" approach may lead one to underestimate the powerful economic and social factors affecting both families and schools, factors which result in profound differences in the income, power, and opportunity enjoyed by the members of different racial and ethnic groups in the United States. It can be misunderstood as an argument that differences in school success are only the effects of "cultural misunderstandings," problems in communication between groups or differences in group values, and not also the consequence of broad and long-standing patterns of subordination, discrimination and neglect.

But although they are not the sole cause of unequal educational outcomes, cultural differences between the home and the school are one important contributing factor. Much of what occurs at school is based on assumptions about what children should already have learned at home. Because the norms in schools tend to reflect those of the dominant group in the community, students whose home experiences have been different from those of the dominant group are often at a disadvantage in school. The problem for these children is that the quality of their relations with teachers and their general academic success depend on their conforming to an unfamiliar set of rules for social interaction, many of which are neither taught within the school nor ever made fully explicit.

These cultural discontinuities extend well beyond the use of a language other than English, or a non-standard dialect of English, in the home. They include differences in

> patterns of non-verbal communication;
>
> communicative etiquette, including rules for opening, turn-taking and closure;
>
> methods of constructing and evaluating stories and other narratives;
>
> approaches to problem solving and task completion;
>
> ways of interpreting and responding to adult questions;
>
> ways of responding to praise, criticism and the exercise of adult authority;
>
> attitudes toward testing, competition and public performance;
>
> levels of self-disclosure and self-assertion.

What distinguishes a "cultural differences" approach from a "cultural deficit" approach is an awareness that the kinds of traits identified above are only dysfunctional within a specific cultural setting. Within the context in which they were learned, they function as adaptive responses for meeting basic human needs. Rather than indicating a diminished potential for learning, they are evidence of what students have already succeeded in learning.

Teachers need to participate in a continuing dialogue with students and parents in order to make the expectations of the school as explicit as possible and also to learn, in the most specific terms, how students successfully communicate, solve problems and complete challenging tasks outside of school. This information should then be used to design learning situations in which students can apply what they already know and are able to do, experience initial academic success and build a foundation for further growth. Ultimately, students should be equipped to function effectively both inside and outside the school, that is, within the larger, or "macroculture," and their own cultural groups.

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Educational Equity

4. Learn to recognize and remedy equity problems in schools.

Educational Equity can be defined as a condition in which all students enjoy equal access to educational opportunities and equal treatment within schools and in which subgroups within the school population experience equal educational outcomes.

> **"Equal access to educational opportunities"** refers to the availability of equivalent tangible or readily measurable resources, services or benefits. These include not only financial resources, facilities, personnel, programs and materials, but also instructional time, contact with other students, access to information and opportunities for parent participation.

> **"Equal treatment"** refers to the quality of social interaction in schools. Equal treatment is not necessarily indicated by identical patterns of staff behavior toward every student, but by the comparable effects of that behavior, especially the extent to which every student is made to feel welcome, valued and secure within the school.

> **"Equal educational outcomes"** refers to equivalent short-term and long-term results of schooling for subgroups identified on the basis of race, national origin, gender, socioeconomic status or physical disability. These results include achievement test scores and other measures of what students have learned and are able to do, school completion rates, and the effects of schooling on access to higher education and employment.

Over the last forty years, efforts to promote educational equity have moved from an almost exclusive concern with equal access issues, as typified in the long struggle to eliminate racially segregated schools, to a predominant focus on equalizing educational outcomes. This is a result of both the realization that equal access policies alone are not sufficient to ensure equal outcomes and the growing conviction that we cannot allow large numbers of our students to fail academically, whatever the reasons for that failure. Unfortunately, there is a marked tendency to explain continuing differences in educational results solely by reference to deficiencies in students and their parents or social conditions in the community. Because it is widely assumed that civil rights laws and local equal opportunity policies have removed institutional barriers to equity from our schools, persistent differences in outcomes tend to be seen as the result of factors largely outside of the school's control. The logical conclusion is that compensatory programs are the only remaining educational remedies.

What is missing in this analysis is a recognition of the central importance of the second component of educational equity, *equal treatment within schools.* Because education is essentially a communicative process, the most important determinant of what is learned in school is the quality of social interaction between teacher and student. It not only directly affects educational outcomes by determining what is learned in that teacher's classroom, but also has an indirect effect by controlling the extent to which students enjoy continuing access to available educational opportunities throughout their school careers.

For example, many schools make it relatively easy for regular classroom teachers to reduce their contact with those students whose language use, behavior, or even appearance, they find most troublesome or confusing. Disciplinary referrals can lead to suspensions or expulsions which deny students the full 180 or more days of instruction guaranteed by state laws. Diagnostic referrals can lead to the isolation of students in classes for the mentally or behaviorally handicapped or their exclusion from advanced placement courses and programs for the gifted and talented.

Equal treatment problems most often occur as a pattern of explicit or implicit negative messages which, considered individually, may not seem to violate students' civil rights, but which have the cumulative effect of denying them equal educational opportunity. Typically, students become so discouraged or embittered that they act to deny themselves equal opportunity by refusing to enroll in needed courses, performing below their ability, cutting classes or, finally, dropping out of school.

This analysis suggests some of the steps which must be taken by schools that want to move beyond the minimum requirements of civil rights laws and fully equalize educational outcomes as well as opportunities:

1. Annually collect and review statistical data to assess the extent to which each subpopulation within the school is provided equal access to available programs and services and to compare educational results for these groups.

2. Complement the statistical analysis with ongoing qualitative research activities, such as observation and interviews, designed to assess the quality of social interaction within the school and the extent to which students from every subgroup are experiencing equal treatment.

3. In developing plans to promote greater equity, include interventions designed to improve social interaction in the classroom and to prevent students from taking actions which will have the effect of denying themselves equal educational opportunities.

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Teacher Self-Awareness

5. Realize the extent to which your own perceptions, thoughts and behavior have been conditioned by your socialization within a particular cultural context. Remain positively, but not uncritically, identified with your own cultural group.

Culture has often been described as a kind of filter or screen between its members and the world, which limits the range of their possible experiences. The beliefs, values, and especially, the language we have learned determine which among the unlimited number of available phenomena are selected for perception, the kinds of meanings we assign to these phenomena and the ways in which we are most likely to act in response to them.

The constraints which language and culture set on perception, thought and action are no cause for existential despair. They are the necessary limits, the organizing framework, which make human experience possible in the first place. The problem is not the existence of these cultural constraints, but our natural tendency to ignore their effects on our lives. It is easy to forget that much of what we think and do is the result of the particular way in which we happen to have been socialized and that our own cultural perspective provides only a partial view of the world. When we fail to realize that "(e)very way of seeing is also a way of not seeing" (Burke, 1989, p.8), we are most likely to cling uncritically to habitual ways of thinking and acting and discount the value of the perspectives offered by other cultures.

"Ethnocentrism" is the term most often used to identify this set of attitudes. Marvin Harris defines it as:

> the tendency to view the traits, ways, ideas, and values observed in other cultural groups as invariably inferior and less natural or logical than those of one's own group (1985, p. 535).

The more natural or logical the ways and ideas of one's own group are seen to be, the less they tend to be seen as cultural traits at all. In the most extreme case, we come to see ourselves as having direct, privileged access to truth or reality, while other groups operate naively and blindly on the basis of tradition, superstition, myth and other "cultural" factors.

Structured introspection is an excellent method for overcoming the tendency toward this kind of ethnocentrism. By responding alone or in a small group setting to a series of questions about their life

histories and current attitudes and behavior, participants are able to clarify to themselves and communicate to others the group or groups with which they identify, what they believe and value and how they came to acquire these beliefs and values. Nitza M. Hidalgo (1993) has described a process of this kind for *Multicultural Teacher Introspection* beginning with relatively simple, descriptive probes, such as:

> Where were you born?
> What is your racial or ethnic heritage?
> What language(s) or dialect(s) were spoken in your home?
> Who made up your family?
> What traditions did your family follow ?
> Was religion important during your upbringing? If yes, How?
> Describe your neighborhood.

and then moving on to questions which require a much deeper level of introspection and analysis:

> How does your background influence the way in which you perceive and understand others?
> What is your definition of normal?
> How should children interact with adults?
> How are your values expressed in classroom dynamics with children?

Avoiding the extreme form of ethnocentrism described above does not require the rejection of your own cultural heritage; in fact, one's sense of cultural identification can grow stronger in the process. In the different, benign sense in which Richard Rorty (1991) uses the term, ethnocentrism is an inescapable fact of life. Through the process of socialization, each person is grounded within a particular cultural context, which must serve as the starting point for any encounters with other cultures. "Our acculturation is what makes certain options live, momentous or forced, while leaving others dead, or trivial or optional." Change occurs through a process in which beliefs suggested by another culture are tested by trying to "weave them together with beliefs we already have." In this way, "our minds gradually (grow) larger and stronger and more interesting by the addition of new options - new candidates for belief and desire, phrased in new vocabularies" (pp. 13-14, 26, 38).

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Responding to Differences

6. Approach other cultures with interest, respect and a sense of shared humanity. Learn to defer judgment until you have made an effort to describe and explain others' ideas and behavior from their own cultural perspective.

"Value diversity" is a popular contemporary theme, and probably none hear it more often than those working in the field of education. Understood in its negative sense, as an appeal to avoid prejudice and discrimination, its message is clear and, it is hoped, persuasive. But the full, positive requirements of a commitment to "valuing diversity" are much less clear.

Are we to value others *because* of our differences, which are profound, or *despite* our differences, which are trivial? In other words, are we really to value diversity itself, the rich variety of people in the world, or sameness, the essential unity of the human race? And if the object is difference itself, what does "value" mean here: to actively support and promote, to passively admire, or merely to tolerate?

Most importantly, how far are we to go? Must we value every difference that is part of some cultural system, no matter how much it seems to conflict with our own beliefs, values or norms? To what extent are we permitted to be selective and judgmental in our approach to other cultural groups? What is the minimum set of shared beliefs and values to which every person should be expected to conform in a pluralistic democracy? Should schools with multicultural populations establish multiple or uniform standards of acceptable behavior, language use and academic performance?

These are questions to which a lifetime of thoughtful discussion could profitably be devoted, but the following, tentative responses may be helpful as a point of departure:

1. In identifying a basis for interest and respect between peoples, there is no need to choose between recognition of a shared human nature and fascination with the rich diversity of cultural life. Our differences are, in fact, a profound expression of what unites us. Human nature is fundamentally the ability to adapt to circumstances by creating culture. Each culture expresses this universal human quality in a different form because each is an adaptive response to a unique set of problems.

2. To recognize the value of each culture as a unique example of human adaptive genius is to argue for a strong form of cultural pluralism, that is, one which permits, and at times even promotes, the maintenance of the language and traditions of subpopulations within a community. If each cultural system is a set of successful answers to a different configuration of economic and social problems, then a culturally more diverse community is potentially a more resourceful and resilient community. It has a larger number of answers available for use in meeting any future problems that threaten all its members.

3. A commitment to pluralism does not require that one admire, or even tolerate, every belief or behavior that is part of some cultural system. One of the most frequently raised concerns about multicultural education programs is that students will be taught to adopt an extreme form of cultural relativism, including the belief that it is improper, or even impossible, to judge the ideas or actions of the members of one cultural group by the criteria of any other group. But there is no necessary link between this kind of relativism and the principles underlying multicultural education or democratic pluralism. Neither absolutely excludes the possibility of judgment across cultures. What they do seem to require is that judgment be deferred until a serious effort has been made to describe and explain another group's ideas or behavior from their own cultural perspective, and that one's own criteria remain open to periodic reevaluation and revision.

Writing early in this century, John Dewey (1916) recognized that a healthy society requires both a widely shared set of communal beliefs and values to insure its solidarity and an openness to new ideas to prevent its stagnation:

The two points selected by which to measure the worth of any form of social life are the extent in which the interests of the group are shared by all its members and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups. An undesirable society, in other words, is one which internally and externally sets up barriers to free intercourse and communication of experience. A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic (p. 115).

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Teacher Expectations

7. Hold firmly to the belief that students from every cultural group within your school have the capacity to succeed academically.

After "value diversity," the theme teachers hear most often is probably "hold high expectations for all students." Again, the message has an immediate appeal to many teachers, but needs to be well grounded if it is to have any lasting effect on instructional practices. It is much easier to sustain high expectations and act on them if they are based on knowledge of what students *already* know and are able to do, rather than blind faith in what they may become. In the case of students from cultural groups other than the dominant one within the school, who typically are overrepresented among those considered at risk of academic failure, the best sources for positive evidence of this kind are to be found outside the school.

The quality that we identify, measure and reward in school as *intelligence* is conventionally understood as a kind of universal cognitive ability, which equips a person to solve problems in virtually any life situation. Conversely, it is assumed that those whom the school has defined as limited in intelligence operate at a similar disadvantage outside of school. But a growing number of cognitive psychologists are arguing persuasively that intelligence is a highly context-specific quality, that academic ability is therefore only one of many useful but independent types of intelligence, and that the kinds of cognitive skills a person most fully develops depend on what were the most important situations to which he or she has had to adapt. According to Stephen J. Ceci and Jeffrey Liker (1986):

> .. persons develop in context, and it is important to know something about their developmental contexts before we pass judgment on their intelligence. Each context carries with it a set of environmental challenges and opportunities that one strives to meet. Intelligence is best seen as the extent to which individuals have successfully met the most important environmental challenges in their lives. The degree to which the skills required to meet one's important environmental challenges overlap those required to meet academic challenges, including IQ test performance, is the degree to which an IQ score begins to reflect one's intelligence (p. 138).

As one example of non-academic or "practical" intelligence, Ceci and Liker studied the methods of a number of expert race track handicappers, most of whom had little formal education and no record of academic success. They found that these handicappers made use of impressive, higher-order thinking skills, involving complex, multivariate analysis. Yet when the subjects were administered IQ tests, the researchers found no correlation between their IQ test scores and their success in handicapping. Similar studies have been conducted of other forms of practical problem solving, including those used by effective business executives, warehouse inventory clerks, sales engineers, wholesale delivery drivers, and waitresses (Lave, 1988). This contextual approach to the concept of intelligence suggests a solid basis on which to establish high expectations for students from every cultural group:

1. **The most critically important situation to which each of us must adapt is the challenge of being socialized within a particular family and local community.** No conclusions should be reached about the limits of any child's capacity to learn without considering that child's behavior outside of school. This can be done informally for most students, or by means of formal assessment instruments, such as the *Adaptive Behavior Inventory for Children* or the *Vineland Social Maturity Scale* (Mercer, Gomez-Palacio & Padilla, 1986). Many children who seem to be limited in their ability to work, communicate, or interact socially in school will be found to function at normal or better levels in their home and neighborhood.

2. **To say that there are multiple, context-dependent types of intelligence is not to say that a person is limited by heredity or socialization to a single kind of intelligence.** Although skills developed to cope with a different set of circumstances may not transfer easily to the classroom, they are evidence of a child's capacity to learn in school if sufficient opportunity is provided and the child is motivated to make use of that opportunity.

3. **It is not enough to believe that all students can learn. This belief must also be expressed in teachers' interactions with students,** including the ways in which students are grouped for instruction, the physical orientation of teachers toward students and the ways in which teachers ask questions and react to student responses. An excellent way to promote equitable instructional practices is the *GESA* Program (Gender/Ethnic Expectations and Student Achievement) which consists of a series of teacher training workshops, coordinated with a schedule of peer observations in the classroom (Grayson & Martin, 1990).

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Pluralism and Conformity

8. Do not ask that students alienate themselves from their own cultural groups in order to satisfy the expectations of the school. Require conformity with the values and norms of the dominant group only in so far as it serves a legitimate educational or social purpose.

A central problem for pluralistic democracies is to find the proper balance between their tolerance of group differences and their need to maintain some minimum set of shared beliefs, values and behavioral norms for the community as a whole. In the United States, our public schools are among the most important sites where this issue is addressed because they have the responsibility for preparing a diverse student population to live and work together as adults.

In establishing uniform codes of student conduct and common educational goals, standards and curricula, schools define the areas of thought and behavior within which conformity will be required of all students and, for each of those areas, what will be accepted as normal and what will be rejected as inadequate or deviant. Until recently, most of our schools have understood their "normalizing" function as one of simply enforcing as much conformity as possible with Anglo-American cultural ways. Today, there is a growing awareness that this is neither necessary nor desirable. Requiring complete assimilation imposes on students a cruel choice between failure in school and alienation from their friends and family. It is also a waste of cultural resources within the community. However, the decision to value cultural diversity in schools has made the tasks of rule making, standard setting and curriculum development more complex and challenging than they were in the past.

One way to approach decisions about what kinds of rules, standards and objectives will be established in a school and how much latitude will be provided under them to accommodate group and individual differences is to begin with the recognition that schools serve at least three major functions within society and that ensuring student conformity with a single, fixed set of rules or standards is less important to some of these function than it is to others.

1. **Preparing Students for Citizenship: Education for Social Competence**
   Schools are expected to prepare students not only for the formal responsibilities of citizenship such as participation in the electoral process, but also for the everyday responsibilities of social life: respecting others' persons and property, using persuasion and negotiation to resolve conflicts, communicating with honesty and civility. Most of this social learning occurs outside of the regular curriculum through teachers' behavioral modeling, counseling and intervention and especially through the operation of the school's discipline system. It is in the public sphere of social life that an individual's behavior impinges most on others' interests and feelings. And it is in this area that the school is most justified in requiring conformity with a single set of behavioral rules; provided that these are reasonable, developed as democratically as possible and open to periodic revision (Gathercoal, 1993).

2. **Preparing Students for Employment: Education for Technical Competence**
   Schooling is also intended to provide each student with the knowledge and skills needed to play a productive role within the economy and provide for his or her own needs. This function is probably most valued by students, parents and the community. This is also a sphere within which there is only limited room for non-conformity because what one needs to know and be able to do to be employable is largely dictated by the methods and machines used in a particular field of work and by the behavioral conventions followed by the workers within that field. The best way in which schools can accommodate student differences in meeting this economic function is to value and support a broad range of career goals, reflecting the range of interests and ambitions within the student population.

3. **Preparing Students for Life-Long Intellectual Growth and Self-Realization: Education for Personal Competence**
   Finally, schools provide students with the means and the motivation to pursue intellectual growth, personal integration and self-expression. It is within this most personal area that schools should allow the most latitude for individual and group differences in what students choose to think and do. This includes such things as their choice of language, style and subject matter in creative writing and other expressive activities; their responses to artistic works, genres and movements; and their perspective on historical events, ideas and persons.

There are three possible responses to ways of thinking, speaking or acting that differ from what is viewed as "normal" by those who have power within a school. The divergent ideas or behavior can be prohibited, tolerated or supported. The preceding discussion is intended to suggest that different responses are appropriate in different contexts within the school. For example, rather than simply prohibit any use of a non-standard dialect in the classroom, a teacher can insist on standard English in formal essays, business letters or science lab reports, but permit or encourage students to use their own dialects in writing short stories or lyric poems. For such students, schooling should provide an opportunity to become fully bicultural, rather than to simply be assimilated by the dominant cultural group within the school.

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Intercultural Communication

9. Improve your skills in intercultural communication and conflict resolution.

In face to face communication, information is transmitted in four ways:

1. **the verbal component of the message**
   including the language or dialect used, verbal style, logical organization of ideas and choice of words;

2. **accompanying non-verbal expressions**
   including the use of pauses, silence and vocal inflections; facial expressions, eye contact or avoidance; body motions, gestures, touching and the management of interpersonal space;

3. **broader patterns of interactional behavior**
   including the level of engagement, extent of self-disclosure, interactive style (how talkative/quiet, direct/indirect, supportive/antagonistic) and the methods used in initiating conversation, turn-taking and signaling closure;

4. **the complete context in which the communication occurs**
   including the time, place and audience; each participant's age, gender, cultural background, and status; their role in the interaction; and the experience, intentions and expectations each brings to the situation.

When verbal communication takes place, the other three factors are also at work, not only supporting and clarifying the verbal message, but also serving as channels for the expression of the participants' feelings about each other and the quality of their interaction. In intercultural communication, misunderstandings of the non-verbal signals, broad patterns of interactional behavior and contextual factors are even more likely than misunderstandings of the verbal message because the rules for interpreting them vary from culture to culture and these rules are rarely considered or discussed, even by those who have learned to follow them.

When such misunderstandings do occur, they often injure the relationship between the parties and generate strong feelings of shame, anger and resentment. This kind of misunderstanding is also an important source of the negative stereotypes which different groups hold for each other. Even when no clearly negative message is read in another's behavior,

enough ambiguity is often created in an intercultural encounter to damage the relationship between the parties. When teachers or students are unsure of their ability to interpret or predict each other's behavior, they may experience a kind of culture shock. This is an anxious, reflexive response to social uncertainty, which impels them to attack or avoid each other. Aggressive reactions of this kind can be seen in teachers' verbal abuse and corporal punishment of students and in students' insubordination, intimidation and physical assault on school personnel. Avoidance responses are apparent in the large numbers of students teachers refer out of their classrooms for disciplinary and diagnostic reasons and in problems of student truancy, tardiness and failure to complete schooling.

The following are some very general guidelines for preventing or correcting intercultural communication problems in schools. The texts recommended below are excellent sources for further study.

1. **Learn as much as possible about differences in the norms for social interaction among the cultural groups represented in your school.**

2. **Maintain a heightened awareness of your own and the student's behavior when engaged in intercultural communication.**

3. **Learn to be an active, empathic listener and to give appropriate feedback to students.** Avoid misunderstandings by making some of your thoughts, feelings and questions about the student explicit during the conversation.

4. **Make a conscious effort to increase your tolerance for ambiguity or uncertainty in social interactions.** Be able to function effectively even when you are not clear about the meaning of a student's response to you and unable to predict what may happen next.

5. **Try to remain unconditionally constructive in your relations with students, parents and other staff, even when conflicts have occurred** (Fischer and Brown, 1988).

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Instructional Strategies

10. Develop a versatile and flexible repertoire of instructional approaches, to use in meeting a wide range of student needs.

Many contemporary trends will require teachers to broaden their repertoires of professional skills. These include the movement to replace tracking and ability grouping with heterogeneous grouping of students; the *Regular Education Initiative*, which is bringing more students with special educational needs into regular classrooms; school restructuring initiatives, which are redefining teachers' relationships with students, other teachers and the curriculum; the enormous increase in the use of instructional technology in the classroom; and, not least, the growing commitment to equalizing educational outcomes for a culturally diverse student population.

A teacher must be versatile and flexible to effectively serve a group of students who have been socialized in different kinds of families, speak different first languages and have entered school at different levels of academic preparedness. When they recognize this need to expand their range of skills, teachers often ask for culturally specific prescriptions, such as the best way to teach to the learning style or manage the behavior of a particular ethnic group. Although there is a high probability that a multicultural classroom will contain a wide range of interests, abilities, learning styles and other student characteristics, it is difficult to predict on the basis of ethnicity alone just what those traits will be or how they will be distributed among individual students. To paraphrase a well-known warning to anthropologists, the teacher should always operate on the assumption that each student is

<div align="center">

LIKE <u>ALL</u> OTHER STUDENTS,

LIKE <u>SOME</u> OTHER STUDENTS,

LIKE <u>NO</u> OTHER STUDENT.

</div>

One way to accommodate group and individual differences without acting on stereotypes is to use a variety of approaches with the entire class, then learn from the students themselves what works best. Instead of assuming, for example, that members of a given ethnic group will perform better in cooperative rather than independent learning situations, or retain more information when they are able to manipulate objects or move their bodies during the lesson,

the teacher should expose everyone in the class to a number of different instructional strategies and assess which are most effective, both for individual students and the class as a whole. Educational plans can then be developed for the rest of the school year, initially emphasizing the kinds of learning situations in which students seem to function best, but also gradually incorporating more of other approaches. In this way, students will be able both to master the content of the curriculum and increase their flexibility and adaptability as learners.

In some cases, it may be both possible and advisable to use even more culturally specific strategies, especially when many or all of the children within a classroom share the same cultural background. *Culturally Responsive Instruction* is one name for an approach in which teachers attempt to create learning situations as congruent as possible with those in which students have been socialized in their homes (Bartholome, 1994). A well-known example is the Kamehameha Education Project, a program designed to improve the reading performance of native Hawaiian children. But in designing programs of this kind it is all the more important that individual differences be taken into account and that educational decisions be based primarily on observation, discussion and negotiation with the actual students and parents in the school community, rather than on published descriptions of their ethnic group.

The following are two other educational strategies which have been found to be effective in working with culturally and linguistically diverse groups of students. Like *Culturally Responsive Instruction*, each emphasizes building needed knowledge and skills on the foundation of what students already know and are able to do.

1. *Strategic Teaching* refers to an instructional model in which students are taught to identify the structures of various types of texts and to monitor the cognitive strategies they use in comprehending them. Students' own cultural experiences are validated by providing opportunities for them to discuss what they already know or have done before they begin new learning (Bartholome, 1994).

2. *Scaffolding* is a method in which the student participates with the teacher in performing the complete task that is to be learned, doing as much as he or she can at the time while the teacher does the rest. As learning progresses, the teacher's support is gradually reduced and the student assumes increasing responsibility for the entire performance (Casden, 1988).

In the recent essay cited above, Lilia I. Bartolome (1994) warns that unless teachers clearly perceive the forces inside and outside the school that cause some groups to be subordinated and act to change the power relationships in their own classrooms, no improvement in educational methods is likely to improve outcomes for students from those subordinated groups. The remedy she calls for is a "humanizing pedagogy," in which students' cultural perspectives are valued and they are empowered to actively participate as learners. This is pedagogy as it has been understood throughout this handbook, not so much as a set of professional techniques but as a kind of personal relationship, the quality of communication between teacher and student.

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Ten Suggestions for Building Cross-Cultural Competence

KNOWLEDGE

General Social Science: Cultural Theory, Ethnography and History

1. Become familiar with basic concepts in anthropology, sociology and related disciplines. Use this knowledge to build an intellectual framework for organizing and interpreting cultural information.

2. Study the culture and history of the ethnic groups represented in your school and community, beginning with your own group.

Applied Social Science: Multicultural Education

3. Understand how differences between the culture of the school and the culture of the home can place some students at a relative disadvantage in school. Learn to bridge this cultural distance by building on existing student strengths.

4. Learn to recognize and remedy equity problems in schools.

ATTITUDES

Toward Cultural Differences

5. Realize the extent to which your own perceptions, thoughts and behavior have been conditioned by your socialization within a particular cultural context. Remain positively, but not uncritically, identified with your own cultural group.

6. Approach other cultures with interest, respect and a sense of shared humanity. Learn to defer judgment until you have made an effort to describe and explain others' ideas and behavior from their own cultural perspective.

Toward Teaching in a Multicultural Setting

7. Hold firmly to the belief that students from every cultural group within your school have the capacity to succeed academically.

8. Do not ask that students alienate themselves from their own cultural groups in order to satisfy the expectations of the school. Require conformity with the values and norms of the dominant group only in so far as it serves a legitimate educational or social purpose.

SKILLS

General Interpersonal Skills

9. Improve your skills in intercultural communication and conflict resolution.

Specific Professional Skills

10. Develop a versatile and flexible repertoire of instructional approaches to use in meeting a wide range of student needs.

WORLD-CLASS EDUCATION FOR THE 21ST CENTURY: THE CHALLENGE AND THE VISION

VISION STATEMENT

As we approach the 21st century, there is broad-based agreement that the education we provide for our children will determine America's future role in the community of nations, the character of our society, and the quality of our individual lives. Thus, education has become the most important responsibility of our nation and our state, with an imperative for bold new directions and renewed commitments.

To meet the global challenges this responsibility presents, the State of Illinois will provide the leadership necessary to guarantee access to a system of high-quality public education. This system will develop in all students the knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes that will enable all residents to lead productive and fulfilling lives in a complex and changing society. All students will be provided appropriate and adequate opportunities to learn to:

- communicate with words, numbers, visual images, symbols and sounds;
- think analytically and creatively, and be able to solve problems to meet personal, social and academic needs;
- develop physical and emotional well-being;
- contribute as citizens in local, state, national and global communities;
- work independently and cooperatively in groups;
- understand and appreciate the diversity of our world and the interdependence of its peoples;
- contribute to the economic well-being of society; and
- continue to learn throughout their lives.

MISSION STATEMENT

The State Board of Education believes that the current educational system is not meeting the needs of the people of Illinois. Substantial change is needed to fulfill this responsibility. The State Board of Education will provide the leadership necessary to begin this process of change by committing to the following goals.

ILLINOIS GOALS

1. Each Illinois public school student will exhibit mastery of the learner outcomes defined in the State Goals for Learning, demonstrate the ability to solve problems and perform tasks requiring higher-order thinking skills, and be prepared to succeed in our diverse society and the global work force.

2. All people of Illinois will be literate, lifelong learners who are knowledgeable about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and able to contribute to the social and economic well-being of our diverse, global society.

3. All Illinois public school students will be served by an education delivery system which focuses on student outcomes; promotes maximum flexibility for shared decision making at the local level; and has an accountability process which includes rewards, interventions and assistance for schools.

4. All Illinois public school students will have access to schools and classrooms with highly qualified and effective professionals who ensure that students achieve high levels of learning.

5. All Illinois public school students will attend schools which effectively use technology as a resource to support student learning and improve operational efficiency.

6. All Illinois public school students will attend schools which actively develop the support, involvement and commitment of their community by the establishment of partnerships and/or linkages to ensure the success of all students.

7. Every Illinois public school student will attend a school that is supported by an adequate, equitable, stable and predictable system of finance.

8. Each child in Illinois will receive the support services necessary to enter the public school system ready to learn and progress successfully through school. The public school system will serve as a leader in collaborative efforts among private and public agencies so that comprehensive and coordinated health, human and social services reach children and their families.

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