

Re-leer puntos importantes

Anotar en su cuaderno

↳ (solo ejemplos que esten relacionados)

JENNY MUÑIZ

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING: A REFLECTION GUIDE



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About the author



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INTRODUCTION

This is an unprecedented time for U.S. schools: a pandemic has upended education for millions of students and families in the midst of nationwide protests for Black lives. These crises have put a spotlight on disparities that have long plagued our education system. School segregation is on the rise.¹ Far too many Black, Indigenous, and other youth of color lack access to educational resources, including technology,² enrichment activities,³ suitable school buildings,⁴ and diverse and effective teachers.⁵ As if resource disparities were not enough, these students are often held back by low teacher expectations,⁶ exclusionary disciplinary practices,⁷ curricula that neglect the struggles and contributions of people of color,⁸ and school norms that privilege white and middle-class ways of communicating, thinking, and even dressing.⁹

These enormous challenges cannot be addressed without culturally responsive teachers. While educators cannot singlehandedly make schools less segregated and more equitable, they can ensure that students feel valued and affirmed in schools, in the curriculum, and in their interactions with peers. They can promote engagement and achievement by connecting curriculum to students' daily lives, cultural backgrounds, and concerns. They can deploy rigorous activities that help students make sense of the world around them and become agents for positive change. They can call attention to educational injustice and work to bolster opportunities for all learners. Culturally responsive teachers do these things and more.

Culturally Responsive Teaching involves connecting academics to students' daily lives, cultural backgrounds, and concerns in ways that support engagement, achievement, and empowerment.

There are many frameworks and ways to think about culturally responsive teaching.¹⁰ Building on this scholarship, New America developed a set of eight core competencies that describe what culturally responsive teachers know and do (see **Figure 1** on page 3).¹¹ Since it was published in 2019, the framework has been used widely by individual teachers, districts, non-profit organizations, and teacher preparation programs to boost culturally responsive teaching practices across the country. Additionally, states such as Illinois and California have incorporated the framework into their resources for teachers.¹²

Building on our past work, this resource offers a set of reflection questions that make self-appraisal, goal setting, and critical conversations across the eight competencies more concrete. We also share research evidence that describes the benefits of culturally responsive teaching. Now is the time to revamp efforts to foster a culturally responsive teacher workforce. We hope this resource enables teachers and those who support them to promote rigorous and relevant learning that leads to the engagement, achievement, and empowerment of all learners.

Figure 1 | Eight Competencies for Culturally Responsive Teaching



Using this Resource

This resource is intended to support the reflective practice and ongoing learning of culturally responsive teachers. It can help teachers assess their personal strengths and develop a plan to sharpen their practice. Additionally, this guide can and should be used by those who support teachers. Teacher preparation faculty, mentors, coaches, and administrators can use this resource to assess how well they model and support the development of culturally responsive teaching practices. Specifically, school system leaders should take a closer look at how they embed the eight culturally responsive teaching competencies outlined in this resource into important school and district initiatives and systems of teacher preparation, training, evaluation, professional development, coaching, and rewards. Ultimately, leaders have the biggest role to play in ensuring all educators have the resources they need to develop the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of culturally responsive teachers.

COMPETENCIES AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS¹³



Competency 1

Reflect on One's Cultural Lens

Culturally responsive educators routinely reflect on their own life experiences and membership in various identity groups (i.e., those assigned by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender), and they ask themselves how these factors influence their beliefs and actions. They understand that they, like everyone, can unwittingly internalize biases that shape their instruction and their interactions with students, families, and colleagues. They understand that they can unknowingly use *stereotypes* (over-generalized beliefs about certain groups) and commit *microaggressions* (subtle comments or actions that are unintentionally discriminatory) if they are not vigilant about how they think and act. Therefore, these teachers diligently work to reflect on their unconscious attitudes and develop *cultural competency*—that is, understanding, sensitivity, and appreciation for the history, values, experiences, and lifestyles of others.¹⁴ Although becoming self-aware can be difficult and uncomfortable, particularly for educators who have never explored their identities, research shows that actions such as guided reflection, reflective journaling, and group discussions can help teachers overcome those feelings.¹⁵

Reflection Questions

When did I become aware of my membership in various identity groups (i.e., those assigned by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic group, sexual orientation, and gender)? What types of interactions did I have with individuals from identity groups different than my own growing up?

How does my identity shape my thinking, values, and understanding of the world?

How does my identity differ from my students and colleagues? How does it shape my interactions with students, families, and colleagues?

Have I ever used or been the victim of *stereotypes* and *microaggressions*? Do I have the skills to respond to *stereotypes* and *microaggressions* if I encounter them?

What are my short- and long-term goals for developing this competency? What resources will I need to accomplish these goals?



Competency 2

Recognize and Redress Bias in the System

Culturally responsive educators understand the difference between bias at the personal level (i.e., racist speech) and bias at the institutional or systemic level (i.e., housing discrimination). They seek to deepen their understanding of how identity markers (i.e., those assigned by race, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender) influence the educational opportunities that students receive. Sonia Nieto suggests that teachers ask questions like: “Where are the best teachers assigned?”, “Which students take advanced courses?” and “Where are resources allocated?”¹⁶ A wide range of resources and professional learning opportunities are now available to help teachers learn more about the ways that institutional racism and other systemic biases disadvantage some groups of students and privilege others. Teachers who take advantage of these resources understand that not all learners are equally rewarded for their hard work. These educators advocate for the disruption of school and district-level practices, policies, and norms that hold students back. Conversely, teachers who are poorly informed about institutional biases may blame learners and perceived cultural deficiencies for academic achievement disparities.

Reflection Questions

Do I understand the difference between bias at the personal level and bias at the institutional or systemic level?

Do I disaggregate and analyze data by student subgroups (i.e., those assigned by race, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and gender) to uncover potential disparities?

How does my classroom, school, and district reinforce barriers that reproduce disparities in student outcomes? Where are resources (people, time, and money) allocated? Which students face surveillance, policing, and higher disciplinary consequences?

What part do I play in the status quo I described above? Am I an enabler or do I take action to disrupt policies, practices, and norms that disadvantage certain student groups?

What are my short- and long-term goals for developing this competency? What resources will I need to accomplish these goals?



Competency 3

Draw on Students' Culture to Shape Curriculum and Instruction

Central to culturally responsive teaching is the belief that students' cultural background and existing knowledge can help bridge new learning. Believing this to be true, culturally responsive teachers use *cultural scaffolding* by providing links between new academic concepts and students' background knowledge that comes from their families, communities, and lived experiences. They regularly use student input to shape assignments, projects, and assessments. Although school system leaders traditionally set formal curricula (see “**The Importance of Culturally Responsive Instructional Resources**” on page 8), culturally responsive teachers evaluate the textbooks and instructional resources they use to ensure they do not perpetuate stereotypes or fail to represent certain identity groups. They complement the official curriculum with examples, newspaper clippings, articles, song lyrics, plays, comics, video games, and other resources that reflect experiences, characters, settings, and themes their students can relate to. In addition to providing “mirrors” reflecting students' own worlds, teachers provide “windows” into the history, traditions, and experiences of other cultures and groups.¹⁷

Reflection Questions

Do the assignments, assessments, and instructional resources I use allow my students to see themselves and see others?

Do I review the assignments, assessments, and instructional resources I use for historical accuracy, stereotypes, cultural relevance, and multiple perspectives?

How do I seek to learn about my students' existing knowledge, cultural backgrounds, interests, issues of concern, and family traditions?

Do I incorporate students' background knowledge, cultures, and family traditions daily or only on particular holidays or units (i.e., Black History Month)?

What are my short- and long-term goals for developing this competency? What resources will I need to accomplish these goals?

Culturally Responsive Instructional Resources

Textbooks and supplementary materials that reflect the experiences, perspectives, and contributions of diverse groups can be powerful tools for cultivating inclusive environments and making learning experiences meaningful, engaging, and effective. Nevertheless, the lion's share of instructional resources available today ignore students' daily experiences, cultures, and concerns. Worse, some go as far as to feature incomplete, distorted, and inaccurate depictions of diverse groups.

To support the development and adoption of more inclusive resources, New America developed a tool to help educators and education leaders become better consumers of curricular resources (see [Culturally Responsive Curriculum 'Look-Fors'](#)). In addition, we have championed the use of open educational resources (OER), which are openly licensed and free to use and repurpose¹⁸. Unlike most proprietary educational resources that prohibit educators from editing or sharing them, OER can be adapted in ways that reflect the experiences, perspectives, and contributions of diverse groups. This means resources—from textbooks to assessments to videos to images—can be tailored to students' out-of-school lives, interests, and cultural backgrounds. And because open licenses permit free distribution as long as credit is given, these resources are available to all students who need them.

OER can also be used to support teacher learning. For example, our colleague Sabia Prescott has spotlighted how OER is helping teachers learn to cultivate LGBTQ-inclusive classrooms (see [Supporting LGBTQ-Inclusive Teaching: How Open Digital Materials Can Help](#)). Over the next few years, New America will be delving more deeply into the role OER can play in supporting inclusive, culturally responsive teaching classrooms.



Competency 4

Bring Real-World Issues into the Classroom

Culturally responsive teachers address the “so what?” factor of instruction by helping students see how the knowledge and skills they learn in school are valuable to their lives, families, their communities. They ask: “What does this material have to do with your lives?” “Does this knowledge connect to an issue you care about?” and “How can you use this information to take action?” They regularly assign activities, projects, and assessments that require learners to identify and propose solutions to complex issues, including issues of bias and discrimination. They actively seek input from families, community members, and students when planning learning activities and they ensure learning happens inside and outside of the classroom. For example, elementary school students might learn about environmental injustice and devise a plan for cleaning up a local river;¹⁹ middle school students might learn to apply math concepts to an analysis of racial inequities in traffic stop data;²⁰ and high school students might engage in a Socratic seminar to explore solutions to police brutality.²¹ Through rigorous and relevant projects, learners in culturally responsive classrooms build their sense of civic responsibility and learn to see themselves as agents of change.

Reflection Questions

How can the content area I teach (i.e., English language arts, science, mathematics, social studies) help students solve problems in their lives, in their communities, and in the world?

How do the assignments, projects, and assessments I use empower and prepare students to solve problems in their lives, in their communities, and the world?

How do the assignments, projects, and assessments I use connect content area knowledge to students’ daily lives, including experiences with racism and injustice?

Do the assignments, projects, and assessments I use develop my students’ self-efficacy, civic responsibility, and motivation to challenge the status quo?

What are my short- and long-term goals for developing this competency? What resources will I need to accomplish these goals?



Competency 5

Model High Expectations for All Students

Culturally responsive educators believe all students are capable of achieving high levels of success. These educators understand that Black, Indigenous, students of color, and other marginalized groups are vulnerable to negative stereotypes about their intelligence, academic ability, and behavior.²² They understand that these stereotypes can inadvertently influence their pedagogical choices and expectations of students, which in turn influence students' perceptions about their own abilities.²³ Culturally responsive educators are vigilant in maintaining their belief that all students can meet high expectations if given proper support and scaffolds, regardless of their identity or past performance. These teachers do not allow students to disengage from learning. They, instead, help students develop high expectations for themselves. Other research-backed behaviors that teachers use to communicate high expectations include using eye contact and proximity with both high-achieving and struggling learners; deploying language, gestures, and expressions to communicate that students' opinions are important; and ensuring all students have access to a rigorous core curriculum.²⁴

Reflection questions

How do I communicate that I have high expectations for students of all backgrounds, even those who have historically struggled?

How do I help students develop high expectations for themselves?

How do I ensure no students disengage from learning?

What supports and scaffolds do I provide to ensure that all students are able to meet rigorous outcome goals?

What are my short- and long-term goals for developing this competency? What resources will I need to accomplish these goals?



Competency 6

Promote Respect for Student Differences

Culturally responsive teachers foster learning environments that are respectful, inclusive, and affirming. Educators contribute to such environments by modeling how to engage across differences and embodying respect for all forms of diversity. They assess how learners from different backgrounds might experience the environment and encourage students to reflect on their own experience with bias. They help students value their own and others' cultures and develop a sense of responsibility for addressing prejudice and mistreatment when they encounter it. Research finds that when students face discrimination, they may develop feelings of frustration, anger, and unworthiness that can result in low achievement, behavioral problems, and leaving school.²⁵ On the other hand, a caring school community can improve students' academic performance and sense of belonging in school.²⁶

Reflection Questions

How do I create learning environments that are safe, respectful, and inclusive for students of all identity groups?

How do I help students develop empathy, respect, and understanding for people who are both similar to and different from them?

How do I role-model proactive response to all forms of bias incidents (i.e., racist speech)?

How do I help students recognize their responsibility to stand up against all forms of bias incidents in their everyday lives?

What are my short- and long-term goals for developing this competency? What resources will I need to accomplish these goals?

Evidence on the Benefits of Culturally Responsive Teaching

Research shows that there are important educational and personal benefits to learning in culturally responsive classrooms. While more rigorous studies are needed to determine which culturally responsive practices influence student outcomes,²⁷ there is evidence to affirm what many teachers already know: culturally responsive teaching works.

Academic Performance

- Courses that utilize culturally responsive teaching practices have been shown to improve student attendance,²⁸ grade-point average,²⁹ high school graduation rates,³⁰ and assessment scores.³¹
- Students who participate in culturally responsive classrooms report having greater interest in school,³² more motivation to learn,³³ and higher confidence in taking standardized tests.³⁴

Life and Well-Being

- Learning about one's own cultural background, history, traditions is associated with positive racial and ethnic identities,³⁵ which in turn benefit young people's self-esteem,³⁶ socio-emotional wellbeing,³⁷ and ability to overcome discrimination.³⁸
- Learning about social issues and racism in school can buffer students of color from the negative academic and mental health outcomes of discrimination.³⁹
- Students who encounter messages about the value of diversity in school are more likely to have positive attitudes toward people of different backgrounds.⁴⁰



Competency 7

Collaborate with Families and the Local Community

Culturally responsive educators assume that parents are interested in being involved in their children’s education and they remove barriers to family engagement. For example, they are available to meet families at convenient times and locations. They are also mindful of any past trauma families might have around interfacing with school.⁴¹ Because schools have traditionally privileged the input and collaboration of white, middle-class families, culturally responsive educators aim to develop the trust of families of color and low-income families to ensure they are involved at all levels of their children’s education throughout the year. They continually seek to learn more about the local community and families’ cultures, values, and expectations for their children’s education. Further, they see themselves as members of the community and they collaborate with local agencies and organizations to arrange resources that families need.

Reflection Questions

Which families are most involved in my classroom and school? Whose voices are typically heard, valued, and acknowledged?

How do I reduce participation barriers for families and community members?

How do I involve families from various backgrounds in developing classroom and school activities, practices, and policies?

Do I consider myself a member of the community in which my students live? Do I regularly visit churches, local stores, or other community spaces?

What are my short- and long-term goals for developing this competency? What resources will I need to accomplish these goals?



Competency 8

Communicate in Linguistically and Culturally Responsive Ways

When educators communicate in culturally and linguistically sensitive ways, students and families feel more welcome and inclined to participate in school. Too often, however, miscommunication can occur between white teachers who value passive and indirect styles of communication and students who come from cultures that prefer active and participatory styles.⁴² The communication styles of Black students, in particular, can too often be misconstrued as adversarial or defiant, which can lead to over-disciplining.⁴³ Therefore, culturally responsive teachers seek to understand how culture influences communication, both in verbal ways (e.g., the tone of voice, rhythm, and vocabulary used) and nonverbal ways (e.g., the amount of space between speaker and listener, eye contact, body movements, and gestures). They allow students to use their natural ways of talking in the classroom. They also honor and accommodate multilingual students and families, including by advocating for translation services and resources in various languages.

Reflection Questions

What is my style of communicating verbally and nonverbally? Does my style of communication differ from that of my students and their families?

How do my behavioral and communication expectations of students and families take into account varying cultural norms?

How do I actively work to reduce communication barriers between myself and students and families?

Do I offer communication in multiple languages? Do I use translators, not students, to improve my communication with families?

What are my short- and long-term goals for developing this competency? What resources will I need to accomplish these goals?

CONCLUSION

Even though the historic closing of schools has created enormous challenges, there is room for optimism. School closures have upended traditional curriculum and teaching practices, opening the door to more culturally responsive models of schooling that integrate students' daily lives, cultural knowledge, histories, and concerns into everything that happens in classrooms—both virtual and in-person. At the same time, a nationwide reckoning over racial injustice is building momentum for replacing practices and policies that reproduce disparities in education. We hope this resource will encourage and enable teachers and education leaders to leave behind the status quo and embrace a model of schooling that honors and empowers all learners, especially Black, Indigenous, and other students of color.

NOTES

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