Culturally Responsive Teaching

University of Washington Professor of Education, Geneva Gay, defines culturally responsive teaching as: “the behavioral expressions of knowledge, beliefs, and values that recognize the importance of racial and cultural diversity in learning. It is contingent on . . . seeing cultural differences as assets; creating caring learning communities where culturally different individuals and heritages are valued; using cultural knowledge of ethnically diverse cultures, families, and communities to guide curriculum development, classroom climates, instructional strategies, and relationships with students; challenging racial and cultural stereotypes, prejudices, racism, and other forms of intolerance, injustice, and oppression; being change agents for social justice and academic equity; mediating power imbalances in classrooms based on race, culture, ethnicity, and class; and accepting cultural responsiveness as endemic to educational effectiveness in all areas of learning for students from all ethnic groups.”


While many educators understand the value of creating a culturally responsive classroom, for many teachers it difficult to imagine what a culturally responsive classroom looks like in practice. This tool, developed by members of the Re-Imagining Migration team and researchers at UCLA, is intended to help make the concept of a culturally responsive classroom concrete and to provide an opportunity for reflection and self-assessment.

Important definitions:

Multi-cultural includes racial, ethnic, linguistic minority, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status (SES), disability, and their various intersections.

Dominant culture a.k.a mainstream, majority and Eurocentric.
**LEVEL 0**
No culturally or linguistically relevant materials were included in my class.

**LEVEL 1:**
**CONTRIBUTIONS APPROACH**

*Heroes, holidays, historical events, & discrete cultural elements are incorporated into class lessons.*

- I linguistically code switch to establish rapport.
- I linguistically code switch, as needed, to facilitate understanding.
- I include major figures, contributors, or historical events from cultures other than the dominant culture into the lesson.
- I include cultural or artistic works (literature, music, visual and performing arts/artists) from cultures other than the dominant culture into the lesson.
- I include research contributions from cultures other than the dominant cultures into my lessons.

**LEVEL 2:**
**ADDITIVE APPROACH**

*Multicultural content, concepts, themes are incorporated to the lesson from multi-cultural students’ perspectives.*

- I include resources and texts that (e.g., reading, film, etc.) present multicultural perspectives in the lesson.
- I include lectures/discussions that present multi-cultural perspectives my lessons.
- I teach a unit that presents multi-cultural perspectives into my curricula.
IS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY INCORPORATED INTO MY TEACHING?

**LEVEL 3: TRANSFORMATION APPROACH**

_The structure of the curriculum enables students to view concepts, issues, events & themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic, racial, & cultural groups._

- I provide resources and instruction that enables students to view concepts, issues, themes and problems from several multi-cultural perspectives.

- I provide resources and instruction that enables students to view class concepts being studied from multiple perspectives, frames of references from various groups and various individuals within those groups.

- I infuse multiple perspectives, frames of references, and content from various groups and perspectives to extend students’ understandings of the nature, development, and complexity of the society in which they live.

- I introduce the “canons” of my discipline and augment them to reflect the complex synthesis and interaction of the diverse racial/ethnic/religious/cultural elements that comprise our society.

**LEVEL 4: SOCIAL ACTION APPROACH**

_Students make decisions on important social issues & take action to help solve them._

- My teaching encourages students to identify existing social problems or issues from multi-cultural perspectives.

- My lessons and assignments encourage students to gather pertinent data from multi-cultural perspectives on existing social problems or issues.

- My teaching encourages students to clarify their values and make decisions about existing social problems using multi-cultural perspectives.

- My teaching encourages students to take reflective actions to help resolve social problems.
Do I view my students through a deficit lens?
Or do I recognize the assets they bring?

- How do I talk about my students’ identities?
- How do I speak about the histories and cultures of groups other than my own?
- Are members, histories, and cultures of the non-dominant group characterized/represented through a deficit lens or with demeaning messages by me or through the resources I use?

If so, how?

RACE
Specify:__________________________________________

COUNTRY/ETHNICITY
Specify:__________________________________________

IMMIGRATION STATUS
Specify:__________________________________________

LANGUAGE/ACCENT
Specify:__________________________________________

RELIGION
Specify:__________________________________________

GENDER
Specify:__________________________________________

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS
Specify:__________________________________________

DISABILITY
Specify:__________________________________________

AGE
Specify:__________________________________________
This checklist is adapted from "Integrating the Curriculum with Ethnic Content: Approaches and Guidelines", pp 189-207 in J.A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Eds.), Multicultural Education: Issues & Perspectives, Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Desdemona Cardoza, PhD and Margaret Fieweger, PhD developed a version of this checklist for the 4th Annual All Campus Faculty Symposium, (1990). “Communicating, Advising and Teaching in a Multicultural University”, California State University, Los Angeles, April 24.

The UCLA Institute for Immigration, Globalization, & Education research team (PI-Carola Suárez-Orozco) further adapted it for the Spencer Foundation funded "Making the Invisible Visible Project" by adding the Cultural Deficit Lens (CRT-1) and No Cultural Relevant Pedagogy Observed (CRT Level 0).

Created by Re-Imagining Migration.
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www.reimaginingmigration.org