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**Regis University**  
School for Professional Studies Graduate Programs  
**Final Project/Thesis**

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CREATING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOMS:  
AN ACTION GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS

by

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Presented in Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Education

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## ABSTRACT

### Creating Culturally Responsive Classrooms: An Action Guide for Educators

Educators must acknowledge that children enter their classrooms and schools with their own language, beliefs about the world, and ideas on how to behave. Educators have the responsibility to evaluate their own philosophy and teaching practice to ensure that all students, regardless of their culture or ethnicity, are provided with a classroom that is appreciative, attentive to, and accepting of their cultures, beliefs, and learning styles. This work contains an action guide for educators on creating and maintaining culturally responsive classrooms (CRC). Teachers can read the guide and discover what a CRC looks like, sounds like, and feels like. The action guide seeks to narrow the dissonance that exists between the culture and ethnicity of students and the culture and the ethnicity of their teachers.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

According to the staff of the U.S. Department of Education (2002), it is expected that, by the year 2010, minority populations will become the majority populations in the U.S. schools. In fact, by 2010, one of every three Americans will be Hispanic, African, Asian, or Native American (Hurtado, 2000). With this rapid growth of diversity in schools, it seems obvious that educators will need to move from a traditional teaching method and adopt a teaching approach that is culturally responsive. However, researchers (Love & Kruger, 2005; Schmidt, 2005; Van Hook, 2002) have suggested that many teachers may not be adequately prepared to teach students of diverse cultures and/or ethnicities.

#### Statement of the Problem

There are numerous studies (Love, 2005; Schmidt, 2005; Shade, Kelly, & Oberg, 2005; Van Hook, 2002; Olneck, 1995; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995), which this author has examined, that indicate a need for dissonance between the culture and ethnicity of students and the culture and ethnicity of their teachers. Olneck found that teaching that is responsive prompts student involvement, while teaching that ignores student norms of behavior and communication provokes student resistance. Because of the demographic data that indicate that minority students will soon be the majority (U.S. Department of Education, 2002), it is clear that educators must evaluate their current teaching beliefs

and styles and open themselves up to the culture, the beliefs, and the learning styles of this growing population of diverse students.

### Background

Although many teacher education programs include a diversity component in the teacher certification program as mandated by the National Council of Teacher Education (NCATE; 1979), a survey conducted by the staff of the National Center for Educational Statistics (1999; as cited in Van Hook, 2002) showed that only 20% of the respondent teachers reported themselves as being comfortable when they worked in diverse classrooms. Furthermore, the use of a culture as a way to interpret a student's behavior and learning style is not something with which many traditional teachers are accustomed. "Up to this point, the students are judged by the cultural norms of the school or the teacher and are expected to learn in the same way" (Shade et al., 2005, p. 19).

### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project will be to create an action guide for teachers to explain what a culturally responsive classroom looks like, feels like, and sounds like. This author's position is that, in this time of increased diversity in schools, it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn in a culturally responsive classroom.

### Definitions

In this project, the term, culturally responsive classroom, will be abbreviated as CRC. Also, the terms, teacher and educator, will be used interchangeably to refer to any person who works within a school setting as a: (a) lead classroom teacher, (b) paraprofessional, (c) counselor, (d) principal, (e) instructional specialist, (f) media



specialist, and/or (g) substitute teacher. The term, traditional teaching method, is defined as the old schoolmarm approach of drill and kill, repetition, lectures, and the belief that students should speak only when they are spoken to by the teacher, or when given permission by raising their hand. In addition, the traditional method of teaching is filled with facts and rules that have little or no connection to students' home lives.

### Chapter Summary

It is this researcher's position that, in this fast paced growth of minorities in schools, teachers must adapt and provide a CRC. Educators have the responsibility to evaluate their own cultural beliefs and adopt a teaching philosophy and practice that ensures that all students, regardless of their culture or ethnicity, are provided with a classroom that is conducive to their culture, beliefs, and learning styles. In Chapter 2, the Review of Literature, this researcher presents the background material to support the position that there is a need for teachers to have classrooms that are culturally responsive. In Chapter 3, Methods, the procedures for the development of this project are detailed.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this project will be to provide educators with an action guide as to what a culturally responsive classroom (CRC) looks like, sounds like, and feels like. The following is an extensive review of the literature that examines culture and the cultural dissonance specifically among Hispanic, African, Asian, and Native Americans. Also, language barriers, different learning styles, and motivation are examined. Then, this author delves into CRC instruction, including teacher student relationships, CRC management, and CRC environment. Finally, preservice teacher training is addressed.

#### Culture

“Culture is a social system that represents an accumulation of beliefs, attitudes, habits, values, and practices that serve as a filter through which a group of people view and respond to the world in which they live” (Shade, Kelly, & Oberg, 2005, p. 18). Hall (1989, as cited in Shade et al.) defined culture as a set of invisible patterns that lead to the way people act, feel, and believe. According to Wikipedia (2007), culture is considered the way of life for a society that includes the codes for: (a) manners, (b) dress, (c) language, (d) rituals, (e) religion, (f) systems of beliefs, and (g) behaviors of law and morality. Shade et al. believe that culture not only provides behavioral and cognitive guidelines for functioning, also, it provides humans with a sense of belongingness and unity that is essential for survival. Thus, when students enter schools and classrooms, they enter with their own culture. They enter as children with: (a) language, (b) beliefs

about the world and their immediate surroundings, and as well as (c) ideas on how to behave. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) believe that the response a student has to learning is a reflection of their culture.

### *Cultural Dissonance*

Weinstein, Curran, and Tomlinson-Clarke (2003) cited several examples of cultural dissonance between students and teachers. The culture reflected in these examples included Hispanic, African, and Asian Americans. Many of the teachers in the following situations responded solely to their students' behaviors from the perspective of mainstream, socially accepted norms; "these teachers are acting in ways that actually discriminate against students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. Such discrimination occurs when teachers do not recognize that behavior is culturally influenced" (p. 270). Also, Weinstein et al. found that for African American students, who were accustomed to a more participatory call-response pattern, their teachers interpreted their behaviors as disruptive and rude. Notable researchers in the development of creating culturally responsive classrooms are Shade et al. (2005). They focused on Hispanic Americans of Mexican descent, as well as African, Asian, and Native Americans. The following are examples of cultural dissonances between students and teachers that have been reported by both Shade et al. and Weinstein et al.

#### *Hispanic Americans of Mexican Descent Cultural Dissonance 1*

The first example of cultural dissonance, as reported by Weinstein et al. (2003), was about a Mexican immigrant, Maria, in a third grade English only classroom. Maria sat quietly in class and spoke only when her Anglo teacher called on her. Often, Maria raised her hand for clarification of an assignment. Her teacher believed that Maria was

insecure and overly dependent. She was unaware that, frequently, Hispanic American parents expect their children to: (a) conform, (b) be quiet, and (c) seek approval.

*Hispanic Americans of Mexican descent cultural style.* Hispanic Americans of Mexican descent represent the fastest growing ethnocultural group in the U.S. and the largest group within the Latino population (Shade et al., 2005). In their development of the CRC model, Shade et al. broke down the cultural dimensions for Hispanic Americans of Mexican descent. They listed a set of values that have essential implications for how children of this culture work and behave in the classroom. These values included: (a) individuals should identify closely with their community, family, and ethnic group; (b) individuals should be very sensitive to the feelings of others; (c) status and role definitions within the community and family are clearly defined and should be respected; and (d) achievement or success is highly dependent on the cooperative efforts of individuals rather than competitive individualism.

#### *African American Cultural Dissonance 2*

The following example of cultural dissonance was reported by Weinstein et al. (2003). James is in the sixth grade and is African American. He is loud, active, assertive, and quick to interject comments without raising his hand. His teacher, an African American, believed James needed to adopt appropriate classroom behavior. Since his behavior did not conform to the school emphasis on taking turns, quietness, and passivity, often, James' teacher reprimanded him and held him in for detention which made him miss recess.

*African American cultural style.* Shade et al. (2005) stated that, "The culture of African Americans is an amalgamation of their African origins and the assimilation of

various Anglo-European orientations to which they were exposed as involuntary immigrants” (p. 21). Within the dimensions of African American culture, they found a set of values that included: (a) an aesthetic appreciation of bright colors, fashionable clothing, and hair styles as the need for self-expression; (b) a deep respect for spirituality and humanness that is often expressed through religion; (c) a spontaneity and ability for rhythmic ability demonstrated in dance, art, music and verbal and nonverbal communication; (d) a value system that includes the desire for success, group unity, freedom, and equality; (e) socialization that prefers cooperation and support from others, which results in strong group affiliations, and (f) a highly developed skill that allow them to accurately perceive people and situations.

### *Asian American Cultural Dissonance 3*

The final example of cultural dissonance between student and teacher was presented as CRC management (Weinstein et al., 2003). Houg is a second grade Vietnamese American girl. Whenever she was asked if she understands, Houg consistently replied, yes, to her teacher; however, her work implied otherwise. Her teacher became frustrated and annoyed and concluded that Houg lacked motivation. She scolded her frequently for not seeking help in class. The teacher was unaware that “yes” in Vietnamese means “da” which translated into “I am politely listening to you” (p. 269).

*Asian American cultural style.* Shade et al. (2005) identified Asian Americans as Asian or Pacific Islanders, Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Asian Indians, Vietnamese, and the Hmong, because they found many commonalities between the cultures in their research study. The values under the dimensions of culture for this group included: (a) strong support of and loyalty to the family, (b) respect and obedience to the elders, (c)

strong commitment to fulfill obligations, (d) compliance with parental expectations, (e) dedication to the work ethic and success, and (f) the maintenance of both personal and family honor and status.

### Language Barriers

Kinder (2002, as cited in Weinstein et al., 2004) reported that more than one-third of the students in elementary and secondary schools were students of color and that almost 1 in 10 had limited proficiency in English. Because of this diversity, Curran (2003) maintained that the old, tried techniques of classroom management that are effective with English speaking students, who are familiar with the culture of traditional U.S. classrooms, may not be effective for these students. To exemplify this issue, Curran began one of her teacher seminar introductions in Spanish. As the participants looked bewildered and lost, Curran held up a piece of paper and said “uno, dos, tres.” After she gave a series of directions in Spanish, Curran switched back to English to question the participants about their feelings. Some of their responses included: “I couldn’t understand you, so I just tuned you out until you spoke English,” and “I was angry, it seemed like a waste of my time” (p. 2). After reflection on their behavior during the introduction, the teachers reported that they: (a) laughed and were off task, (b) spoke English together, (c) had it translated, and (d) the assignment took a long time. Her daring technique of speaking to preservice and experienced teachers solely in Spanish (i.e., not the native language of most of the teachers) was described as unnerving by the participants. For Curran, this pseudo experiment resulted in new understandings for these teachers, “We need to understand, expect, and feel comfortable with the natural responses . . . that occur when our students participate in interactions in which they are not

completely proficient in the language” (p. 2). The natural responses, such as laughter, first language use, and anger are some of the student behaviors that teachers reprimand students for, whose primary language is not English. Curran believed that a teacher’s request for silence may not allow English Language Learners (ELLs) the opportunity to support each other through quick translations of instructions. She believed that, when a teacher demonstrates his or her respect and understanding for the support that an ELL student needs, the student will behave respectfully. “It is when a teacher appears insensitive or uncompromising that students respond with anger” (p. 3). Similar to Curran, Olneck (1995, as cited in Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995) concluded that students’ resistance is provoked when their behavior and communication norms are ignored by teachers; however, the use of teaching that is responsive, will prompt student involvement. In Curran’s experiment with teachers, she was reminded that educators must recognize students’ behavior that, initially, may be interpreted as bored, inattentive, or lazy, may be a natural response to their inability to comprehend the language.

### Learning Styles

In several studies (Dunn, Dunn, & Price, 1975, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1984, 1985, 1989; all cited in Dunn et al., 1993), learning style has been defined in terms of individual reactions to 22 elements that include: (a) the classroom environment, (b) emotionality, (c) sociological preferences, (d) physiological strengths, and (e) processing inclinations. Beaty (1986), Dunn, Dunn, and Price (1977), and Marcus (1977; all cited in Dunn et al.) found that: (a) individuals learn in different ways; (b) students achieve statistically higher test and attitude scores when they are taught with approaches and resources that complement, rather than antagonize, their learning style; and (c) educators

are able to recognize only a few elements of their students' learning styles through observation. The other elements can be identified through the administration of a learning style test.

The Learning Style Inventory (LSI; Dunn, Dunn, & Price, 1975, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1984, 1985; all cited in Dunn et al.) is a comprehensive approach to the identification of an individual's learning style, and it has been used in research conducted at more than 90 institutions of higher education in the U.S. (Dunn & Dunn, 1992, 1993; both cited in Dunn et al.). In these studies (Dunn & Dunn, 1992, 1993; both cited in Dunn et al., 1993), Dunn and Dunn identified 7 or 8 of the 22 learning style variables that predict distinctions between high and low achievers. Consistently, these variables included: (a) motivation, (b) persistence, (c) responsibility, (d) perceptual strengths, and (e) time of day. Low achieving students did not tend to be persistent or responsible. Also, they tended to be nonconforming and worked at their own pace. These students preferred to learn tactually and/or kinesthetically rather than auditorially or visually. Poor achieving students preferred late morning, afternoon, or evening for instruction. However, when these students were taught through the use of their learning styles, they became achieving students (Dunn, Dunn, & Price, 1992/1993, Dunn & Griggs, 1988; both cited in Dunn et al.).

Shade et al. (2005) referred to learning styles as individually preferred orientations that facilitate one's accrual of knowledge. They cited several theories (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1996; Bruner, 1960; Eisner, 1985; Good & Brophy, 1977; Polanyi, 1966) of learning which included: (a) behavioristic, (b) stimulus-response model, (c) listening and receiving knowledge, (d) analytical learning approach,



(e) aesthetic approach, (f) tacit learning, and (g) the new constructivist learning approach. Shade et al. defined constructivist learning as the learning that takes place when individuals take what they believe to be important information and connect it with their own experiences or concepts of the world. Furthermore, they defined a second dimension of learning style, that is focused on the extent which students take responsibility for their own learning, “the extent to which individuals are engaged depends on their goals, needs, and interests” (p. 62).

### Motivation

According to Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995), for culturally diverse students, engagement in learning is most likely to occur when the students are intrinsically motivated; “effective teaching, is culturally responsive teaching” (p. 17). Wlodkowski (1999) referred to motivation as a hypothetical construct; it cannot be observed or measured, instead, it must be inferred from what people do. He believed, that to be effective with all students, educators must relate their content to their students’ experiences. Wlodkowski and Ginsberg reflected on the last 40 years of education and found that for motivation, the prevailing metaphors have been reward and punishment, and manipulation and control. “The fact that an inordinately high number of at-risk students are poor and people of color should cause us to reflect on how well we understand motivation” (p. 18). They acknowledged that educators have shown interest in becoming more culturally responsive; however, often, these theories are inhibited by educational systems which are dominated by extrinsic reinforcement such as grades and class rank. In addition, frequently, teachers who claim to be responsive, yet administer pop quizzes or grades for participation, confuse students and lower their intrinsic

motivation. “Without sensitivity to culture, we teachers may unknowingly contribute to the decline of motivation among our students” (Wlodkowski, p. 9).

In response, Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995) developed a framework to influence the motivation of students, in order to identify who the students are naturally and culturally. The framework is based on four motivational conditions that both the teacher and student continuously create and enhance.

1. Establishing inclusion. Creating a learning environment where students and teachers are respected and in tune to one another.
2. Developing attitude. Creating a positive attitude for learning through personal relevance and choice.
3. Enhancing meaning. Creating meaningful and challenging learning experiences that value students’ values and perspectives.
4. Engendering competence. Creating learning experiences that are effective because students feel they are learning something of value. (p. 19)

These researchers believed that, when students can perceive that what they are learning is valuable for them and makes sense, their intrinsic motivation will follow. Wentzel (2003) believes that teachers and students can establish a caring classroom that leads to a student’s sense of belongingness and motivate engagement for learning. Noddings (1992, as cited in Wentzel) suggested four aspects of teacher behavior that are critical for the establishment of a classroom of caring: (a) model caring relationships with others, (b) establish dialogues characterized by a search for common understanding, (c) provide confirmation to students that their behavior is perceived and interpreted in a positive light, and (d) provide practice and opportunities for students to care for others.

### Culturally Responsive Instruction

Gay (2000, as cited in Black, 2006) reported that culturally responsive teaching is a method that is based on and uses students’ cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and

learning styles in every lesson, every day. Black claimed that culturally responsive teaching does not entail the adoption of “tacos on Tuesday” (p. 2) or ethnic stereotypes; instead, it promotes genuine understanding of the everyday, real life experiences of other cultures.

According to Ford (2005), “The less we know about each other, the more we make up” (p. 3). She maintained that students want a classroom where:

1. Diversity is recognized and honored; a colorblind and cultureblind philosophy is avoided.
2. Cultural mismatches are minimal, not only among students but between teachers and students.
3. Teachers take the time to get to know students for the unique individuals they are. Students feel physically and emotionally safe to be themselves.
4. Formal and informal, standardized and nonstandardized assessments are fair and equitable.
5. Materials are culturally relevant and meaningful to students’ backgrounds and experiences.
6. Lessons and activities are infused with multicultural content that is respectful.
7. Teachers display cultural sensitivity and competence. (p. 3)

Wlodkowski (1999) is a firm believer in culturally responsive teaching. In an elaboration on the four motivational strategies that he developed with Ginsberg, he transposed them into questions to serve as guidelines for motivational strategies which are related to learning activities in the classroom. The learning activity he focused on was research. The first question was related to the establishment of inclusion. How do teachers develop an atmosphere where students and teachers are connected to each other?

Wlodkowski (1999) believed that collaborative learning was the motivational strategy that worked with inclusion. By the random formation of small groups, students are able to exchange experiences and beliefs. The second question was related to the development of attitude. How do teachers create a favorable attitude toward learning

through personal choice? Wlodkowski felt that the establishment of relevant learning goals was the preferred motivational strategy to use. The students in the small groups were requested to choose an area of interest to them and use that interest as the focus of their research. The next motivational condition he addressed was to enhance meaning. How do teachers create engaging and challenging experiences that include students' values and beliefs? Wlodkowski found that critical questioning was essential. For the research projects, the teacher formed small groups to ask questions and make predictions, these questions and predictions were then recorded. The final question was related to competence. How do teachers create an understanding that students have learned something that they value and can make connections with their real life? Wlodkowski maintained that the only way to motivate students was to give them self-assessments. After the questions and predictions had been verified, the students were able to articulate their own statements about their learning from the research process.

#### *Teacher Student Relationships*

“Adults who experience collective action with youth then experience a sense of being more connected and effective in their work and also demonstrate a change in beliefs about both the competence and motivation of youth in general” (McCombs, 2003, p. 5). Central to the Learner-Centered Psychology Principles (LCPs), it is essential to establish positive personal relationships (Pierce, 2003). In the LCPs, the learner is put first; the focus shifts from what teachers teach, to what students learn (McCombs). According to McCombs, teachers, who ascribe to LCPs, perceive all students as capable of learning and that learning is a life long process. Also they believe that, if students' learning is supported, motivation comes naturally. The teacher, who believes in the use

of LCPs, can quickly move from his or her role as teacher to expert learner who shares the ownership of learning with the student. Baker (2006) conducted a study to examine the extent to which teacher/child relationships contributed to school adjustment among elementary children. Her findings suggested that the teacher/child relationship was linked to students' success in school, particularly for younger children. She posited that children, with developmental difficulties or behavior problems but had a close teacher relationship, were notably advantaged relative to their peers who lacked that close teacher relationship. Good and Brophy (1994, as cited in Baker) believed that differences in teachers' professional capabilities to manage and engage students and to provide a safe and positive classroom are associated with improved academic success for children. According to Hamre and Pianta (2001, as cited in Baker), students' relationships with their kindergarten teacher predicted their adjustment in school including their grades and standardized test scores through the fourth grade. Baker (1998, as cited in Baker) found that positive relationships with teachers strongly predicted students' school satisfaction among low income African American children, who experienced a sense of alienation from school.

Shade et al. (2005) believed that teachers are an important factor for the success of their students; "Through their actions, teachers send messages to children as to whether or not they are accepted, whether or not they are competent, whether or not they can accomplish the tasks they are given, and whether or not the classroom actually belongs to them" (p. 41). That is, teachers set the climate for learning, which either facilitates or hampers the students' cognitive engagement. Also, they found that teachers send two types of messages to students, verbal and nonverbal. These messages reveal to

the students whether they are capable of success. “The type of praise, criticism, encouragement, and support given by the teacher transmits the message of what the teacher expects of the individual, how the teacher views the student’s ability to perform the tasks, and the extent to which the teacher is prepared to work with the student to help him or her accomplish the work in the classroom” (p. 41). Based on this belief, they maintained that teachers are responsible for the intellectual climate of the classroom. They do this when they set time limits and select activities that meet the learning styles of the students. Also, they concluded that teachers provide their students with visions and images of the future. According to Shade et al., it is the teachers’ responsibility to ensure that the activities and material being taught are relevant and perceived as valuable in the lifestyle and reality of their students.

#### Culturally Responsive Classroom Management

According to the staff of the National Commission for Teaching and America’s Future (2002, as cited in McKinney, Campbell-Whately, & Kea, 2005), 50% of urban teachers leave their profession within the first 5 years of their career. These teachers reported classroom management and behavior issues as the factors that influenced their decision. In the positive behavior supports model, the emphasis is on incentives and strategies to teach new positive behaviors rather than reaction to negative behaviors. For example, an ABC analysis in which the antecedent, behavior, and consequence of the identified behavior is examined in order to determine the behavior that needs to be adapted along with the events that surround the behavior. Once a hypothesis is developed about why the behavior occurred is developed, an intervention is designed for the student. The idea of the ABC analysis and positive behavior support model is that,

analysis of problem behaviors and their causes, will lead to thoughtful and effective decisions in the design of interventions. According to McKinney et al., students' behavior is analyzed, and their culture is assessed in order to determine the incentives and strategies to be used in this ABC model. Kauffman, Mostert, Trent, and Hallahan (2002, as cited in McKinney et al.) recommended that all teachers should examine their own personal beliefs and values, which are reflected in their teaching and relationships with students.

Weinstein et al. (2003) reported that, after teachers examine their own beliefs and values, they must acknowledge the cultural, ethnic, racial, and class differences that exist among all people. Instead of being "color-blinded" (p. 270), teachers should learn about their students' backgrounds, cultural norms, previous education, discipline procedures and practices, and the way in which time and space are viewed in their culture. They identified a set of tasks for the development of culturally responsive classroom management that included: (a) create a physical setting that supports academic and social goals, (b) establish expectations for behavior, (c) communicate with students in culturally consistent ways, (d) develop a caring classroom environment, (e) work with families, and (f) use appropriate interventions to assist students with behavior problems.

Weinstein et al. (2003) believed that many things can be done to establish an environment that supports academic and social goals. For example, a map of the world in which students' countries of origin are identified, a welcome banner in various languages, and a reading corner with literature that promotes diversity and tolerance could be used. In addition, students' desks can be arranged in clusters to promote small group learning, and a kindness box can be displayed in the classroom to remind students to show random

acts of kindness. To establish expectations and clear communication, Weinstein et al. suggested the formation of only three to six rules of conduct that are explicit to all students. These rules or norms must be practiced and discussed by the students in the class. To develop a safe and caring classroom, they suggested that teachers and students could share stories about their lives; this would make students feel more valued when others listen to their concerns or opinions. They believed that a strong culturally responsive classroom management teacher recognizes that little or no family involvement may be due to a different cultural perspective and not a lack in commitment to their children's education. Finally, Weinstein et al. addressed behavior problems. CRC managers may view behavior issues as reflections of cultural norms and, perhaps, see the benefits of the intensity and passion that is expressed in the classroom. Also, these teachers are more likely to consider the influence of race, culture, and ethnicity when they take disciplinary action. Cartledge and Milburn (1996, as cited in Weinstein et al.) found that African American male students were referred disproportionately for behavior problems. This was similar to Irvine's (1990, as cited in Weinstein et al.) findings that African American students were two to five times more likely to be suspended at a younger age and to receive a lengthier suspension.

According to Black (2006), in order to master CRC management, teachers need to:

1. Recognize the judgments and assumptions they make about their students from their own cultural views
2. Understand, economic, social, and political issues and the values of different cultures
3. Adopt the attitude that all students can learn regardless of their culture
4. Create caring classrooms where all students are accepted. (p. 4)



Wentzel (2003) reported that students described caring teachers as those: (a) whose communication style allowed and welcomed student participation and input, (b) who set high expectations for behavior and performance, (c) who modeled caring relationships by showing interest in their students, and (d) who provided constructive rather than critical feedback. Her findings suggested that, if students enter school with goals that are not compatible with the teachers,' the establishment of a caring environment, one that is culturally responsive, may play a critical role in their motivation to pursue the teacher valued goals. Students, who pursue these teacher valued goals, are more likely to display positive behavior and make socially responsible choices. Mitra (2002, as cited in McCombs, 2003) found that, often, teachers blame their students for not being interested in their own learning and education; however, many students have reported that instruction was not compatible with their learning styles.

### Culturally Responsive Classroom Environment

According to Shade et al. (2005), in order to develop a culturally responsive learning environment, the teacher and the students must work collaboratively toward the development and construction of knowledge. These authors developed five principles toward this goal.

The first principle that Shade et al. (2005) identified is that the learning environment must be inviting. Students must feel as though they are active members in the classroom, which should be a community that elicits a pleasant physical and psychological feeling that welcomes all students. They believed that the students' comfort level, if their basic needs are met, will predict how the student will function. "For children of color and families of immigrants, their initial assessment of their

acceptance depends on whether or not they perceive pictures, symbols, or other visual representations that remind them of their homes, communities, and values” (p. 43). Also, they suggested that the position of student desks enhance the relationships between teacher and student as well as student and student. Desks should be placed to encourage a sense of connection and collaboration; this is just as important as individual space. They acknowledged that this arrangement changes the rules of the classroom. The traditional method of teaching, in which no talking is mandated nor peer assistance with work is allowed, is challenged. Heck (1978, as cited in Shade et al.) claimed that a classroom is a stage, and the students are the actors. She believed this made the learning experiences more purposeful and stimulated discovery and exploration. Specifically, for students, who are immigrants or have never traveled, the establishment of this new class environment can: (a) help students learn about others, (b) sensitize them to the feelings of others, and (c) make them feel safe and secure in their environment. Shade et al. claimed that the environment should be visually inviting, and it should change consistently throughout the school year. In addition, sound and tactile opportunities should be provided that correspond with the learning that takes place.

The second principle, that Shade et al. (2005) believed was pertinent, is that the teacher of the learning environment must emit personally inviting messages. This teacher must be warm and supportive, through his or her: (a) expectations, (b) attitude, (c) language, and (d) verbal and nonverbal cues. Through these messages, students feel as if they are learners and part of a community. Gossman (1991), Moody (1990) and Veldman and Worsham (1982, all cited in Shade et al.) found that, often, these kinds of messages are not sent to students who differ in: (a) skin color, (b) language, and (c) behavior.

Gossman found that teachers attributed higher academic and intellectual potential to Anglo American students than to African or Hispanic American students, even though the teachers had the exact information on each student. Moody observed that, when Anglo American students asked questions, explored, and touched materials, teachers saw them as gifted and smart. Consequently, when African American students demonstrated the same behaviors, the same teachers perceived them as being disrespectful and having behavior problems. According to Shade et al., some teachers have difficulty with students, who have accents, and respond differently to them. Also, they believed that African American students are disproportionately referred to special education programs because of their more active, emotionally responsive, and assertive behavior.

“Consciously or unconsciously, teachers project through procedures, interactions, body language, and classroom management techniques the idea that some children are not worthy of being taught by them” (p. 47). For teachers, who do not speak the first language of their student, Curran (2003) suggested several strategies, that can be used to reduce students’ fear and anxiety and provide a safe and secure environment. She believes that small details, such as learning to pronounce students’ name correctly, welcome signs in various languages, eye contact, and cooperative group learning can provide this inviting message. Again, Weinstein et al. (2004) suggested that teachers evaluate their own cultural values, motives, biases, and beliefs in order to be less likely to misinterpret culturally different behaviors.

The third Shade et al. (2005) principle was that an inviting classroom is one in which there is firm, consistent, and loving control. Also this principle challenges the traditional teacher, in that, with the call and response participation that is associated with

African American students, some teachers may fear that all students will become out of control. Shade et al. found that students' disruptive behaviors, most often cited by teachers in urban schools, included: (a) they have low attention spans and are distractible, (b) they do not complete their tasks in a timely manner and are tardy to school, (c) they lack organizational skills, (d) they speak without being called on or raising their hand, and (e) they lack self-control and are always talking. These findings were from urban schools where a majority of the student population was African American. Shade et al. believed that these behaviors do not have to be seen as disruptive or inappropriately; instead, they suggested that teachers should stop and observe how students are managed at home or in public settings. They suggested that teachers should become more aware of the community by their attendance at: (a) ethnic festivals, (b) churches, or (c) restaurants. They cited several researchers (Boykin, 1982; Clark, 1983; Grossman, 1984; & Philips, 1983) who found that some teachers, who overreact and misinterpret the behavior of their students, because they do not understand the behavior or what is culturally acceptable.

The fourth principle was that an inviting learning environment provides students with a sense that they can accomplish and succeed in the tasks asked of them (Shade et al., 2005). They believed this is related to the students' self-concept which includes many facets: (a) physical, (b) social, (c) personal, and (d) academic. They posited that, with children of color, all the facets of self-concept are positive except for the academic facet. Teachers can indirectly support this negative self-concept in what they say; for example, a teacher who tells a student to "Speak proper English!" or introduces a concept by saying, "I know this is too hard for you . . ." (p. 54). It is this author's position that

every child and every person can learn and that humans are life long learners. This belief requires that teachers be held responsible to promote the concept that each student should feel successful in a positive classroom environment.

In the final principle, Shade et al. (2005) emphasized an environment in which all members work collectively. The promotion of collective learning is a trend found in many cultures. However, this trend is part of the LCP's (Pierce, 2003) model. When students are allowed to work together in a community of learners with shared values as well as a common agenda and positive relationships, students' individual needs for a safe and secure environment are met (McCombs, 2003). Shade et al. compared Hispanic Americans of Mexican descent, Asian, Indian, and African American students and found, that in the Hispanic cultures, individuals identified closely with their community, family, and ethnic groups. For African Americans, they found that there is a preference for cooperation and supportiveness in the culture. They reported that members of the American Indian culture identify and prefer a group setting, and Asian Americans have strong support and loyalty to family. These findings suggested that the members of most cultures have a strong affiliation to cooperative learning and collectiveness. In their study, Dunn et al. (1993) found that Hispanic American students of Mexican descent were more peer oriented and functioned better in small groups. Also, Maddahian (2004) recommended the use of the instructional strategy of cooperative learning that has been advocated by Culturally Responsive Education (CRE) experts. This learning is fostered by the educator as he or she monitors group work and helps students to communicate their ideas.

## Preservice Teacher Training

Mosher and Sia (1993) claimed that, in the year 2000, fewer than 5% of U.S. school teachers were minorities. In contrast, they reported that, by the year 2020, more than 46% of U.S. school aged children will be minorities. Assuming these statistics are accurate, it seems apparent that U.S. teachers must be prepared to work in diverse schools. Curran (2003) observed that most teachers are at a loss, when it comes to teaching diverse students, particularly English language learners (ELLs). Ford (2005) maintained that the lack of preparation is likely due to the paucity of substantive teacher training on how to work effectively with culturally diverse students and families. Mosher and Sia (1993) described teacher education programs as fragmented and superficial. However, Van Hook (2002) reported that diversity is not limited to race and culture; instead, she believes that diversity refers to the ever changing aspects of: (a) family composition, (b) SES, (c) ethnicity, and (d) religion. Members of the National Council for The Accreditation of Teacher Education (1979) adopted a statement that requires a diversity component to be included in teacher certification programs. According to Mosher and Sia, often, this diversity component is a separate course; however, when the course is complete, so is the multicultural component. The author of this paper, as part of her teacher certification program, enrolled in a course titled Multicultural Education. Once this course was completed, so did the diversity component of education. Mosher and Sia conceded that the success of multicultural education is dependent upon the educators' understanding of diversity and the efficacy of their effort to implement it. According to Nawang (1998), in teacher diversity programs, the expectation seems to be that a single exposure to multicultural education is sufficient to prepare teachers to deal

with diversity in the classroom. “This one size fits all mentality runs the great risk of stereotyping subordinated students and engenders instructional recipes that quickly reduce the complexity of dealing with cultural and linguistic diversity” (p. 3). However, he noted that treating everyone alike by use of the color blind approach is not the answer. Black (2006) concurred with this viewpoint and criticized those teachers who adopt taco Tuesdays or a tourist approach to diversity.

Van Hook (2002) found that teachers’ beliefs are a notable factor in how preservice teachers respond to diversity in the classroom. She advocated that teacher beliefs about culture and diversity should be examined through guided reflection, if the faculty of preservice teacher programs want to alter their students’ knowledge or current beliefs. “Preservice teachers must be willing to confront one’s own attitudes and privileges before they can explore their beliefs and, ultimately, consider the implications of their teaching practices” (p. 257). Van Hook conducted a study to examine barriers to preservice teachers’ implementation of multicultural education. She identified four common categories that reflected preservice teachers’ barriers: (a) it is difficult to discuss sensitive topics, (b) school policies and practices were detrimental to diversity, (c) it was difficult to implement diversity curriculum, and (d) many were unable to recognize and accept diversity. Through her research, Van Hook concluded that the true barriers to the implementation of a CRC are these barriers perceived by the teachers. She conceded that more research must be conducted on these either real or imagined perceived barriers in order for the faculty of teacher education programs to identify themes for reflection in classes. She believed it should be the aim of teacher preparation programs to eliminate these barriers in order for teachers to be comfortable with diversity

in the schools. The findings from a plethora of studies (Curran, 2003; Ford, 2005; Hagan & McGlynn, 2004; Love & Kruger, 2005; Maddahian, 2004; McKinney et al., 2005; Mosher & Sia, 1993; Nawang, 1998; Schmidt, 2005; Shade et al., 2005; Van Hook, 2002; Weinstein et al., 2003; Weinstein et al., 2004; Wlodowski & Ginsberg, 1995) indicated that the evaluation of one's own cultural beliefs and values, through self-reflection and self-appraisal, is essential in order to effectively teach diverse students and implement CRCs. "Without an honest and thorough self-appraisal, it will be difficult for educators to seek out the resources they need to be effective with and supportive of culturally diverse students" (Ford, p. 2). Mosher and Sia were firm in their belief that the responsibility of educators is to provide all students with a chance to succeed. Therefore, in preservice education programs, teachers should be provided with "opportunities to teach in culturally diverse settings . . . where they can have on-going dialogue and support of other teachers, colleagues, and supervisors" (Mosher & Sia, p. 11).

#### Chapter Summary

As demonstrated in this review of literature, there are many reasons to adopt, implement, and maintain a CRC. As reported by the U.S. Department of Education (2002), by 2010, minority students will be the majority in the educational system. It was evident from Shade et al. (2005) that different groups, such as African American, Hispanic American of Mexican descent, Asian American, and Native American students, have different learning styles, thus, different learning needs. In accordance with the research that suggests that only 20% of respondent teachers reported themselves as being comfortable when they worked in diverse classrooms (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999; as cited in Van Hook, 2002), it is this researcher's opinion that there is a



desperate need for all educators to establish CRCs. In Chapter 3, this researcher will describe the method, target audience, goals, and procedures for the development of this much needed action guide. “School should be a place where instructional strategies promote students’ self-esteem and teach specific concepts related to the universality of all people and the positive aspects of diversity” (Mosher & Sia, 1993, p. 4 ).

## Chapter 3

### METHOD

The purpose of this project was to develop an action guide for educators to use as a tool to teach them how to create culturally responsive classrooms (CRCs). The need for CRCs came to the attention of this researcher when she began her teacher education program. Through over 800 hours of observations in Denver area schools, it became clear that enrollment in only one course in multicultural education, as part of the teacher certification program, did not adequately prepare her for teaching in the diverse classrooms of today. Additionally, through research gathered and through observation in different schools, it seemed as though all educators were in need of CRC training.

#### Target Audience

This action guide was designed for all educators, with a focus on Grades K-8; however, the guide is easily adaptable and usable for other levels of education including, preschool, secondary, and universities. Educators who are new to the teaching field, educators who have few or many years of experience, educators who work in the least diverse districts or in the most diverse districts, educators who want to become more in tune with the current diversity in schools, and educators who already have a commitment to multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching, will be interested in this action guide.

## Goals and Procedures

The goal of this action guide was to introduce or reintroduce educators to culturally responsive teaching, and what a CRC looks like, sounds like, and feels like. The action guide provides statistics as well as current problems that demonstrate the need for CRCs. Subsequent sections of the action guide include the essential elements that must be present in a CRC. Each element is described and includes a picture to illustrate the element. Following the elements are key activities that educators may use to create CRCs. This is followed by a list of teacher responsibilities and ways to maintain CRCs. Additionally, a self-assessment and appraisal is included in the action guide to help educators to examine and reflect on their own cultural beliefs and values and how these beliefs affect their students.

## Peer Assessment

Assessment of this action guide was obtained from four colleagues through informal feedback, recommendations, and suggestions for further research. The assessors for this action guide represent a variety of education positions in a Title 1 school, including: (a) the principal, (b) the student achievement coordinator, (c) the special education leader, and (d) the English Language Learner (ELL) coordinator. Each assessor provided comments, editing marks, and suggestions on the hard copy of the guide, which was provided to them by this researcher.

## Chapter Summary

Based on the literature (Mosher & Sia, 1993; Shade, Kelly, & Oberg, 2005; Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2004), there is clearly a need for CRCs. Through this project, this researcher employed knowledge gained from an extensive

review of literature and personal observation to provide educators with meaningful tools to address the issue of diversity in schools. In Chapter 4, she provided the action guide that is easy for educators to understand and read, thus, they will be able to implement and maintain a CRC. Feedback, discussion, and peer reviews are presented in Chapter 5, as well as limitations to the project and recommendations for future studies.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS

The purpose of this project was to provide educators with an action guide on how to create culturally responsive classrooms. To accomplish this, an extensive review of literature was done to collect ample information on culturally responsive classrooms (CRC). The result was an action guide which provides what a CRC looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Also included in the guide are key activities that can be used to foster a CRC and the educators' responsibilities. At the conclusion of the action guide, a self-assessment and reflection is provided for educators to assess their own culture and beliefs.

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# Culturally Responsive Classrooms

*AN ACTION GUIDE FOR EDUCATORS*



**CRCS**

*By: Jennifer L. Paz*

# Culturally Responsive Classrooms

Numerous studies indicate that there exists a dissonance between the culture and ethnicity of students and the culture and the ethnicity of their teachers.

Demographic data point to a nation where minorities will soon be the majority, thus it is essential that we provide Culturally Responsive Classrooms (CRC). This action guide will help all educators develop and create CRCs.

The following action guide is divided into sections based on what a CRC looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Each section is preceded by a brief list which is then followed by an in-depth explanation. The guide concludes with a self-reflection questionnaire and a list of useful resources for more information regarding CRCs.

# Astounding Statistics

- In 2002, fewer than 5% of all U.S. school teachers were minorities.



- By the year 2010, the minority populations in the U.S. will become the majority populations, with one of every three Americans being Hispanic, African, Asian, or Native American.





# Problem

*“Up to this point, the students are judged by the cultural norms of the school or the teachers and are expected to learn in the same way” (Shade et al).*



Many teachers are not accustomed to using culture as a way to interpret student behavior and learning style.



A survey done by the National Council of Teachers for Educational Statistics showed only 20% of respondent teachers as being comfortable when they worked in diverse classrooms environments.



Due to this data, it is imperative that educators evaluate their current teaching beliefs and styles, and open themselves up to the culture, beliefs, and learning styles of our growing diverse student population.

# What is Culture?



Culture is a social system that represents an accumulation of beliefs, attitudes, habits, values, and practices that serve as a filter through which a group of people view and respond to the world in which they live (Shade et al.).



Culture is a set of patterns that lead to the way people act, feel, and believe (Hall).



Culture is the way of life for a society that includes codes for manners, dress, language, rituals, religion, and beliefs.

**The aim and purpose of this action guide is to ensure your classroom is one that is culturally responsive**



**This action guide will tell you what a Culturally Responsive Classroom (CRC) is and what a CRC:**

**Looks like**

**Feels like**

**Sounds like**



*As educators we must acknowledge that children enter our classrooms and schools with their own language, beliefs about the world, and ideas on how to behave. Educators have the responsibility to evaluate their own philosophy and practice to ensure that all students, regardless of their culture or ethnicity, are provided with a classroom that is appreciative, attentive to, and accepting of their cultures, beliefs, and learning styles.*

**WELCOME**



*Bienvenido*

Καλώς ήρθατε

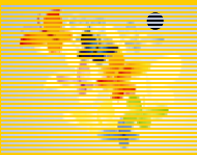
# What a **CRC** looks like



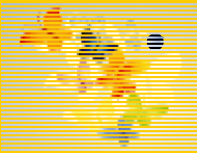
***Effective teaching is Culturally Responsive teaching***

- ❖ *Welcoming Walls*
- ❖ *First impressions*
- ❖ *Desks and table space*
- ❖ *Classroom libraries and literature*
- ❖ *Clear and concise expectations*
- ❖ *Balanced relationships*
- ❖ *Student interactions*
- ❖ *Routine, routine, routine*

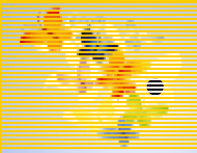
## *Welcoming walls*



**Walls are painted or covered in pastel colors, which have been shown to have a calming and welcoming effect.**



**Doors, windows, sinks, desks, and other classroom areas and furniture are labeled in different languages represented in the classroom.**



**Current student work is proudly displayed and visible to everyone.**

## *First impressions*



Artwork, cloths, prints, artifacts, and flags that represent a variety of cultures and ethnicities are essential when creating a CRC. When students recognize that their own culture or ethnicity is appreciated in their classroom, it is welcoming and inviting to them which fosters a safe learning environment.

*Bienvenido*

First impressions are everlasting. It is imperative that students and parents feel welcomed into a school and classroom. Welcome your students and parents with welcome signs in a variety of languages.

## *Desks and table space*



Desks or tables are arranged in clusters, pods, or U-shapes, which help foster learning by allowing cooperative and independent learning. Desk arrangements allow students to develop relationships with others, take risks, help or get help, communicate their ideas, and facilitate student centered learning.



Strategic placement of desks can promote small group learning and enable the teacher to differentiate instruction and teach to all levels.



## *Classroom libraries and literature*



A CRC has an abundance of books (fiction and non-fiction) that are at all reading levels of the students in the classroom. These books represent different cultures, religions, languages, countries, ethnicities, and beliefs. Professional multicultural books that are relevant to educators are also available in the school. It is imperative that teachers model their personal interests in diverse cultural readings.



## *Classroom libraries and literature*



It is important to remember that picture books are essential in all grade levels as means for establishing connections, creating a sense of reality, and fostering imagination. In addition, when dealing with English Language Learners (ELLs), picture books provide a solid foundation for their learning.

- Provide a nook or corner that is comfortable for students to read, including pillows, bean bags, and small blankets.
- Allow your rich library of culturally responsive literature to be viewed by all of your students.
- Include a poster on how to select a “just right” book.
- Always share with students the literature and books that you are reading. This models reading which promotes student-teacher relationships.
- Reading is always promoted as positive and meaningful. It is never used as a punishment.

## *Student interactions*



- In a CRC, students are actively engaged and found working together to maximize their learning.
- Students and teachers value the learning taking place when the learning is collaborative.
- A CRC looks like controlled chaos, where students are utilizing a variety of learning styles and objectives all at once.
- The classroom appears full of busy, engaged, and learning children.
- Students are able to gain a higher understanding through open discussions and collective learning.

# *Clear and concise expectations*

## Classroom Expectations

Keep your hands and feet to yourself

Respect people and materials

Follow directions the first (1<sup>st</sup>) time given

Raise hand to speak

SMILE - practice makes perfect

Clear expectations for following classroom rules should be posted in a highly visible place.

Allowing students to help establish these expectations at the beginning of the school year gives them “buy in” and ownership of the classroom.



Not only are expectations clear and concise, they are illustrated through modeling, role-playing, and diagrams and pictures.

## *Balanced relationships*



Activities will be modified based on students' learning styles. Multi-sensory lessons are taught in all areas of the curriculum.



The educator will actively move around the room, offering support, sitting with students, and providing individualized instruction and guidance.



The teacher and the student are equal partners and responsible for learning from each other.

## *Routine, routine, routine*

Routines allow students to feel safe and secure. When students feel safe and secure, their learning is maximized. Research suggests that predictability and consistent schedules for ELLs empower them by allowing them to know what to expect throughout the day.



Post the daily schedule.



Provided students with personal space, a place to call their own. This can be a desk, a cubby, a shelf, a bucket, a personal coat hook or anything that provides a sense of privacy and ownership.

# What a **CRC** sounds like



***Effective teaching is Culturally Responsive teaching***

- ❖ *RESPECT*
- ❖ *Welcome to Politeville*
- ❖ *Classroom greeter*
- ❖ *Gestalt aha's*
- ❖ *Positive messages*
- ❖ *Higher level questioning*
- ❖ *Numerous languages*
- ❖ *Songs and rhymes*
- ❖ *Equal talk time*
- ❖ *Laughter, humor, and smiles*

# *RESPECT*

A CRC is one which exudes respect. Students respect each other, students respect the teacher, and the teacher respects the students. Respect is heard in all aspects of the learning environment. Students will know the expectations and will hear them often.



**RESPECT**

“Respect all people and materials”

“Active listen”

“All eyes on the speaker”

“Keep hands and feet to yourself”



## *Welcome to Politeville*



**In a CRC one will hear “I” messages, apologies, and respectful language. Practice and role playing are essential for these manners and messages to be conveyed. The educator is responsible for ensuring all who enter Politeville are utilizing manners and respecting others so that all learning is maximized.**

## *Classroom greeter*



A CRC has a student greeter who is always ready to welcome any visitor to the classroom. The greeter will welcome visitors with a friendly and firm handshake and invite them into the learning environment. The role of greeter will rotate so that each student is confident and given the opportunity to be a classroom greeter.

*“Bienvenidos a nuestra clase”*

*“Welcome to our classroom”*

## *Gestalt's "Ahas"*

**"I get it!"**  
**"Ohoo!"**  
**"Aha!"**  
**"YES!"**  
**"I see!"**  
**"Finally!"**



**CRCs are classrooms that have constant student chatter surrounding a lesson. It is often possible to hear students understanding in a CRC. Students have whole group and small group discussions and can often assist one another to facilitate these "ahas."**

## *Positive messages*



**“I like the way...**

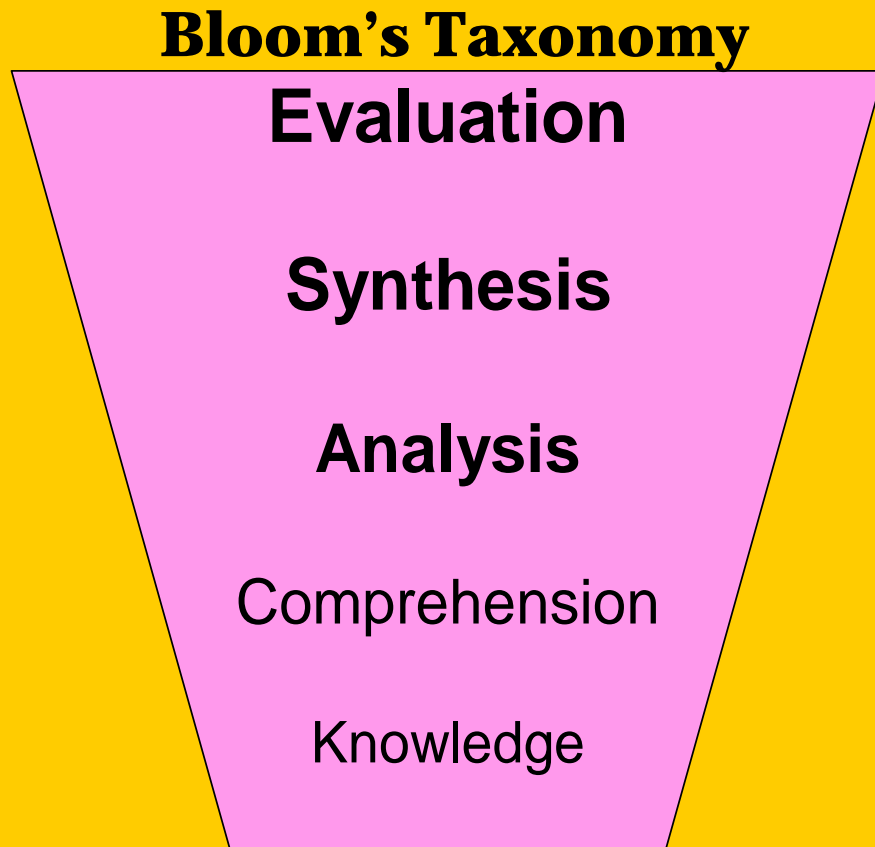
**“I appreciate it when....**

**“I am proud of...**

**“I am amazed at how...**

A teacher who has created a CRC utilizes specific positive messages. These messages are representative of student behavior and work, are not given generically, and build intrinsic motivation in students. The students in a CRC take pride in their work and behavior and value this positive specific feedback.

## *Higher level thinking*



The culturally responsive educator challenges students using higher level questioning to elicit higher level thinking.

The teacher focuses on questions, activities, and projects which utilize the upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy, (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation).

# *Numerous Languages*



All languages are welcome and can be spoken in a CRC.



A culturally responsive teacher does not fear a language that is different from his or her native language.



Other languages are encouraged spoken to enhance meaning, provide comfort, or simply to interpret and translate instructions.



Accurate name pronunciation is critical, and it is up to the educator to make sure students names are respected.

## *Music, songs, and rhyme*

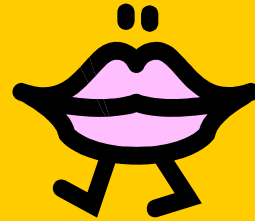


Music, songs, rhyme, and rhythm are used to reinforce learning in a CRC classroom. Particularly for ELLs, having specific movements or gestures can create deeper meaning. Songs, rhythm, and dancing assist students in recalling important information.



**Don't stop dancing!**

## *Equal talk time*



- A CRC is a classroom where the teacher's voice and students' voices are equally heard.
- Students are engaged and accountable for their learning when the teacher uses discussion strategies too ensure whole class participation.
- The teacher does not dominate or restrict participation. Instead, Think-Pair-Share (TPS), choral and call response, popcorn out, interpreters, number heads, non-verbal responses, jigsaw, number heads, the doughnut, rally table, group spelling, and popsicle sticks are encouraged and used.
- The teacher learns from the students, just as the students learn from the teacher.



# *Laughter, humor, and smiles*



**Laughter is abundant in a CRC. The classroom has a teacher who is relaxed, full of smiles and love. Students in a CRC will embrace each other with loving laughter and are cherished as risk takers who feel safe enough to make and learn from mistakes.**

**Laughter is contagious.**



# What a **CRC** feels like



***Effective teaching is Culturally Responsive teaching***

- ❖ *Warm and Welcoming*
- ❖ *Friendly*
- ❖ *Success*
- ❖ *Comfortable*
- ❖ *Safe*
- ❖ *Compassion*
- ❖ *Collectivism*
- ❖ *Melting pot*
- ❖ *Smiling*

## *Warm and Welcoming*



**Walking into a CRC immediately puts one at ease. The warm pastel colors, the welcoming signs, the smiling faces, and the proudly displayed student work all create a warm and welcoming feeling.**

# *Friendly*

## Circle of Friends



Upon walking into a CRC, one is greeted with a firm, friendly handshake, words of welcome, and smiling faces. It is easy to feel the safe learning community by observing friendly interactions among students and teachers.

# *Success*

A+

The learning that takes place in a CRC is felt immediately. Students are highly motivated, actively engaged, and helping one another. In a CRC, students' efforts and attitudes lead them to be successful as they diligently work collectively and independently.



## *Comfortable*



Upon walking into a CRC, all guests, including students, parents, and educators feel comfortable and accepted. Students are at ease and know they are valued within the classroom. They know their routines and have their own personal space.

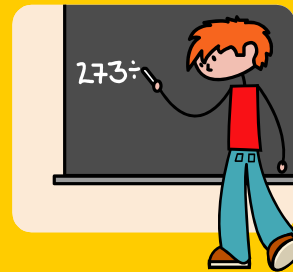


## *Safe*

Clear expectations and classroom rules create a safe and productive CRC. Students belong to a learning community which allows them to feel safe and to be themselves. A culturally responsive teacher utilizes a variety of strategies so that students feel safe enough to learn. Students are proud where they are academically and who they are culturally.

Students in a CRC feel safe:

to learn



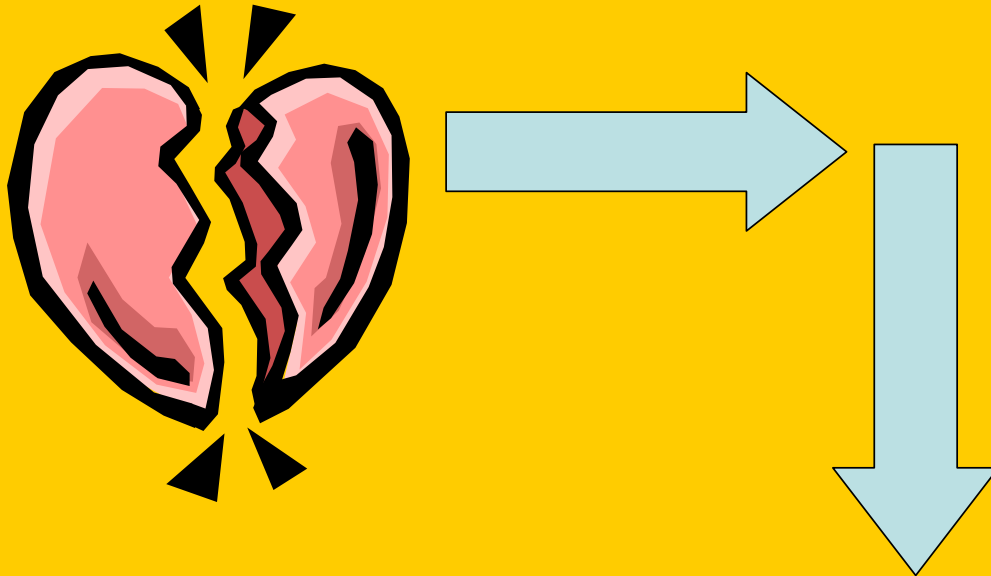
to laugh



to make mistakes



## *Compassion*



A CRC instills compassion as a core value that reaches out to all students. Students are encouraged to provide compassion to others in a variety of situations, such as when someone is ill, hurting, or needs help. They are also taught to have compassion for their own thoughts, feelings, and actions.



## *Collectivism*

**Feelings of community and collectivism are evident in a CRC. Students feel they are a community as they work together and celebrate each others' successes, as well as offer words of encouragement when needed.**



# *Melting Pot*



**A CRC is a melting pot of distinct races, ethnicities, ages, cultures, abilities, and beliefs. All members of the classroom community feel accepted and valued. Teachers who have created a CRC do not adopt a color blind approach to diversity. Instead, they recognize and celebrate the differences that exist within their classroom.**

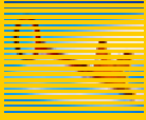
# *Smiling*



Smiling is contagious in a CRC. Different cultures, different values, different people, and different lives become one in a CRC. Happiness is apparent in student's work, their feelings of success, and by the smiles all around you!



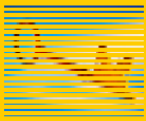
# Keys for creating a



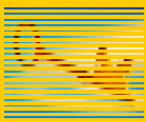
Teach “I” messages and create a debugging system - ignore, move away, talk friendly, talk firmly, get help



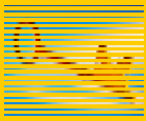
Random, value order grouping - shoe size, age, lost teeth, favorite ice cream, place of birth, color of shoes



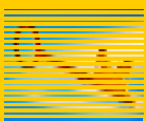
Points – opportunities for whole class, team, and independent



Questionnaires - “getting to know you” activities



Multicultural lesson plans - integrated throughout the entire curriculum

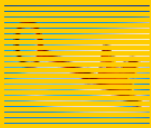


Constant communication- parents, students, colleagues

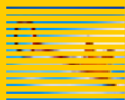
# Keys for creating a



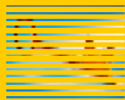
Collaborative learning strategies -  
TPS, popcorn out, popsicle sticks,  
number heads, choral/call response,  
thumbs up, jigsaw, number heads,  
the doughnut, rally table, group  
spelling



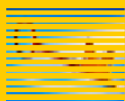
ELL adaptations - buddy student,  
non-verbal responses, translators,  
interpreters, songs, gestures, regalia



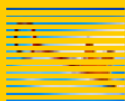
Personalized notes



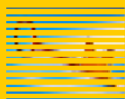
Morning meetings



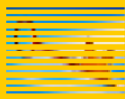
Name games



Class compliments/rewards



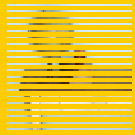
Cooperative learning



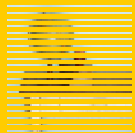
Relevant student chatter

# **You are responsible for creating**

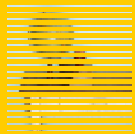
## **CRCs**



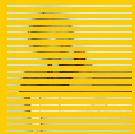
**Research different cultures and become knowledgeable about those represented in your classroom and school.**



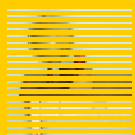
**Evaluate your own culture and beliefs, acknowledging and reflecting on how they might differ from others.**



**Create lessons that are meaningful and challenging, as they will be highly valued by students because of the strong personal connections.**

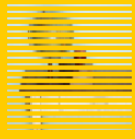


**Be willing to switch gears, especially when students seem unengaged or confused.**

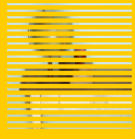


**Have knowledge of individual students' needs and have plans on how to advance them to the next level.**

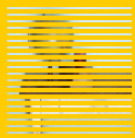
## **Responsibility continued....**



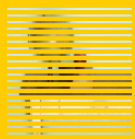
**Establish positive personal relationships with all students and faculty.**



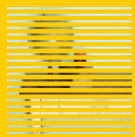
**Be aware of the verbal and non-verbal messages you may be sending.**



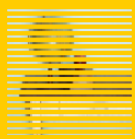
**Set high expectations for yourself and students.**



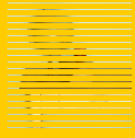
**Have open communication and be ready to communicate in culturally consistent ways.**



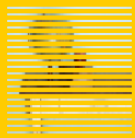
**Have a ZERO tolerance zone for bullies, disrespect, or ethnic stereotypes.**



**Be consistent with punishments and rewards.**



**Hold students responsible for their learning.**



**Make mistakes and apologize.**

# **The Future is in Your Hands**



**“Through their actions, teachers send messages to children as to whether or not they are accepted, whether or not they are competent, whether or not they can accomplish the tasks they are given, and whether or not the classroom actually “belongs” to them” (Shade et al.).**



# Culturally Responsive Classrooms

## **Self-reflections & Self-appraisal**

- 1. How prepared am I to work with students who are different than me?**
- 2. How do I feel about working with students who may hold values and beliefs that differ from what I value and believe?**
- 3. How do I work with students who have different customs and traditions? Am I accommodating?**
- 4. How do I feel about working with students who have different learning styles and communication styles?**
- 5. Do I even want those students in my classroom? If so, what am I doing to make them feel welcome?**
- 6. What fears, stereotypes and biases do I have about people who are different than me?**
- 7. How will these beliefs get in the way of my teaching and working with these students?**

# Culturally Responsive Classrooms

## Useful References

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## Chapter Summary

The future of today's classrooms is in the hands of the educator. This researcher has prepared an action guide for teachers to inform them what a CRC looks like, sounds like, and feels like. Additionally, a list of activities, list of teacher responsibilities, and a self-assessment/reflection is provided in the guide. The guide was presented to assessors representing a variety of educational positions for feedback and comments. Feedback, discussion, and assessor reviews of the action guide are presented in Chapter 5. Limitations to this guide and indications for further studies will also be discussed.

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION

The need for culturally responsive classrooms (CRCs) is tremendous. The effort to create CRCs is collective. Districts, schools, administrators, teachers, faculty, and students must work together to ensure that the learning environment is one that is accepting, safe, and culturally responsive. The action guide presented in Chapter 4 was developed in order to provide educators of all levels of experience, information and ideas on how to create and maintain a CRC. Educators can read the guide and discover what a CRC looks like, sounds like, and feels like. They also have the opportunity to reflect and evaluate their own cultural beliefs and values, as well as find other informative resources on creating CRCs.

#### Objectives Achieved

There were two main goals that this project aimed to achieve. The first goal was to provide a clear and easy to use action guide for all educators. This objective was achieved through extensive research on CRCs in order to compress the information that was most pertinent for the educator. This allowed the action guide to be more specific and at the same time, not overwhelming.

The second goal was to present information that would enable the educator to know: (a) what a CRC looks like, (b) what a CRC sounds like, (c) what a CRC feels like, (d) key ideas for creating a CRC, (e) teacher responsibilities, and (f) what their own cultural beliefs and values are and how they differ from their students. Both goals were

achieved however, creating and maintaining a CRC has many more components than were set forth in the action guide thus, not all were covered. The information in the action guide was (a) designed to focus on information most pertinent to educators on CRCs and (b) was intended to be adapted into the busy educator's school and classroom which ensures that the information can be put into play.

### Evaluations

This action guide was presented and evaluated by four colleagues representing a variety of education positions in a Title 1 school, including: (a) the principal, (b) the student achievement coordinator, (c) the special education leader, and (d) the English Language Learner (ELL) coordinator. The main issue that was discussed is the significant relevance of this guide and the support that is needed to develop CRCs. The author made adjustments in the action guide, by including a brief synopsis of the guide in the beginning, and a reference section at the end, in order to address some of the assessors' suggestions. Each educator was impressed with the flow and aesthetics of the guide and the ease in which it could be incorporated into the classroom setting. Further suggestions indicated this guide to be a useful tool for all teacher training.

### Limitations to the Study

The action guide was designed for all educators mainly in the elementary school level. Although middle school and high school educators may find the guide useful, it was not designed with them in mind. Many of the ideas however, can be easily adapted. The most pressing limitation is the educators themselves. If educators do not have a clear understanding of their own cultural values and beliefs, they may not have openness to the cultural values and beliefs of their students and how they differ from their own.

Additionally, if an educator does not have a clear understanding of the need for or what a CRC is, they may require more background information before reaching for this action guide.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

Recommendations for future research would include how to create CRCs in middle schools and high schools. By adding this component, this guide would truly reach all levels of education and students. Another recommendation is to research how educators evaluate their own beliefs and cultures. Being able to understand how educators evaluate and recognize their own beliefs and values may help taper the cultural dissonance that exists between students and their teacher. By incorporating this information to future studies, it further enables educators to fully create and maintain a CRC.

#### Project Summary

The purpose of the project was to develop an action guide for educators on what a CRC looks like, sounds like, and feels like. In addition, the guide provided essential ideas on how to create a CRC, as well as a self reflection and appraisal on one's own cultural beliefs. Following research that was conducted regarding CRCs, the author focused on information applicable to educators. The action guide proved to display information that was relevant, educational, and helpful to educators. The guide succeeded in flowing nicely, being aesthetically pleasing, and pleasant to read. Overall, the action guide was met with positive feedback given by the assessors and the guide is now available for current and future educators.

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## APPENDIX A

### Permission for Approval of Student Picture Use

Permission for Approval of Student Picture Use

February 26, 2007

Dear Parents,

My name is Jennifer Paz and I am currently a teacher at Wyatt Edison and a student at Regis University. I am working on my final project which is an action guide for teachers on Culturally Responsive Classrooms. For this guide I will be taking pictures of our school, classrooms, and teachers. Occasionally students may be shown in these pictures. In order to include these pictures, I need your permission to photograph your child. Please understand that **these photographs will be used for educational purposes only**. If you support the possibility of your student's photos being included in my project, please sign and date below.

Thank you,

Ms. Jennifer Paz

I understand that \_\_\_\_\_ (student's name) photo may be used in the production of an action guide for Culturally Responsive Classrooms and will be used for educational purposes only.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(signature of parents)

El 26 de febrero de 2007

Estimados Padres,

Me llamo Jennifer Paz y yo soy actualmente una maestra en Wyatt Edison y una estudiante en la Universidad de Regis. Trabajo en mi proyecto final que es una guía de la acción para maestros en Aulas Culturalmente Sensibles. Para esta guía que sera aserca de fotografías de nuestra escuela, de las aulas, y de los maestros. Ocasionalmente estudiantes pueden ser mostrados en estas fotos. Para incluir estos retratos, yo necesito su permiso para fotografiar a su niño. Entienda por favor que estas **fotografías serán utilizadas para propósitos educativos solamente**. Si usted aprueba la posibilidad de que las fotos de su hijo/hija ser incluida en mi proyecto, por favor firme abajo.

Gracias,

Ms. Jennifer Paz

Entiendo que mi mi hija o hijo \_\_\_\_\_ foto puede ser utilizada en la producción de una guía de la acción para Aulas Culturalmente Sensibles y será utilizada para propósitos educativos sóloamente.

\_\_\_\_\_ Fecha \_\_\_\_\_  
(la firma de padres)