

# **CREATING CULTURALLY PROFICIENT CLASSROOMS**



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# Today's Goal



- To facilitate conversations that surface our beliefs and values that tend to influence our practices as educators.
- I will facilitate exploration of these issues in a non-threatening manner.

# Ground Rules



- Listen attentively and respond thoughtfully
- Show mutual respect
- Accept each other's experiences as true and valid and not to be debated
- Grant each person the right to pass

# Difficult Dialogue: Stereotypes



- Stereotypes are defined as rigid preconceptions we hold about all people who are members of a particular group, whether it be defined along racial, religious, sexual orientation, socioeconomic, or other lines.
- Stereotypes begin as generalizations. Generalizations are how we develop our first impressions. They are the guidelines for our behavior. During the development of our first impressions generalizations remain generalizations or they become stereotypes.

# Difficult Dialogue: Stereotypes (cont.)



- The belief in a perceived characteristic of the group is applied to all members without regard for individual variations.
- The danger of stereotypes is that they are impervious to logic or experience.
- All incoming information is distorted to fit our preconceived notions.

# Difficult Dialogue: Stereotypes (cont.)



Activity:

Report 1-2 stereotypes that apply to the group that you identify with.

# What is Culture?

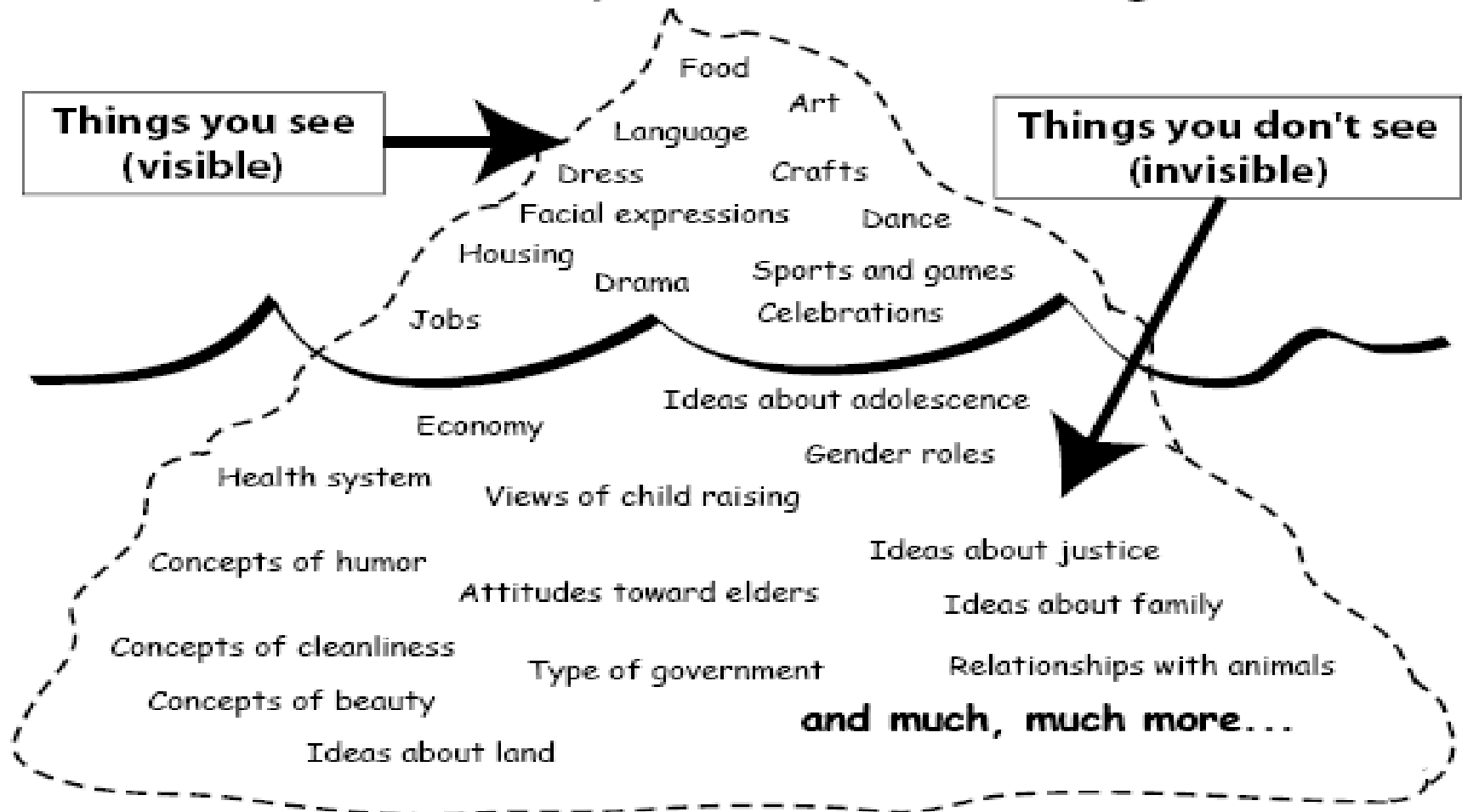


- The integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups.

# Teacher Key



## Teacher Key to Culture as an Iceberg





# What is Cultural Proficiency?



- An approach to responding to the issues that emerge in a diverse environment. It provides tools and help for an increasingly diverse world with an increasing number of well-intentioned and fearful people.
- It is not a theory, nor is it an off-the-shelf program that you add to your agenda. It is a way of being that involves the use of tools for both individual and organizational development.

# Model for Cultural Proficiency



## Six-Stage Model

Cultural Proficiency  
Cultural Competence  
Cultural Pre-competence  
Cultural Blindness  
Cultural Incapacity  
Cultural Destruction

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum (Lindsey, et al, 2003 adapted from Cross, et al., 1989)

# Examples of how attitudes may play out in schools...



- **Cultural destructiveness:** elimination or denial of other cultures

“They need to adapt to our way of doing things to make it here.”

- **Cultural incapacity:** belief in the superiority of one culture over another along with disempowering behavior.

“African-American teachers just don't have the right profile to be promoted to principal positions.”

- **Cultural blindness:** no recognition of cultural differences among and between cultures or behaving as if they do not matter.

“As I walk around the school, I do not see color or different nationalities; I only see children.”

## Examples of how attitudes may play out in schools...



- **Cultural pre-competence:** awareness of the limitations of an organization's practices in interacting with various cultural groups.

“We really need a Spanish-speaking counselor to help us out with the adjustment of our Latino students.”

- **Cultural competence:** standards for individual and organizational practices reflect attention to the dynamics of cultural differences and the adaptation of values, behaviors, policies, and practices.

“For our new teacher orientation, let's create culturally diverse work teams to have teachers explore their beliefs about and experiences with the teaching and learning needs of diverse students.”

- **Cultural proficiency:** respond positively and affirming to differences; esteeming culture, knowing how to learn about individual and organizational culture, and interacting effectively in a variety of cultural environments.

“Conflict is normal and I'm glad we are looking for ways to approach conflicts and tensions when they occur.”

# 1. Elements of Culturally Proficient Classrooms



- Classrooms in which teachers and students work together to create and sustain an environment in which everyone feels safe, supported, and encouraged to express her or his views and concerns.

## 2. Elements of Culturally Proficient Classrooms



- Content is presented in a manner that reduces all students' experiences of marginalization and, wherever possible, helps students understand that individuals' experiences, values, and perspectives influence how they construct knowledge in any field or discipline.

### 3. Elements of Culturally Proficient Classrooms



- Teachers use a variety of teaching methods in order to facilitate the academic achievement of all students.

## 4. Elements of Culturally Proficient Classrooms



- Classrooms where thoughtful, mutual respect, and academic excellence are valued and promoted.
- The kinds of interactions that occur between and among teachers and the students in the classroom determine the level of proficiency.



# Elements that Influence the Level of Cultural Proficiency in Classrooms



1. course content
2. prior assumptions and awareness of potential cultural issues in classroom situations
3. planning of class sessions, including the ways students are grouped for learning
4. knowledge about the diverse backgrounds of your students
5. decisions, comments, and behaviors during the process of teaching

# Choosing Course Content



- When you have control over books, course-packs, and other materials, the following two questions should be considered:
  1. Whose voices, perspectives, and scholarship are being represented?
  2. How are the perspective and experiences of various groups being represented?

# Considerations for Course Content



Include multiple perspectives on each topic of the course rather than focusing solely on a single perspective, as is appropriate.

Include as much as possible, materials written or created by people of different backgrounds and/or perspectives.

It is important to include works authored by members of the group that the class is discussing.

Include materials that address underrepresented groups' experiences in ways that do not trivialize or marginalize these groups' experiences.

Be aware of and responsive to the portrayal of certain groups in course content. For example, comparing policies of different countries.

Avoid dichotomizing issues of race into black or white. Whenever possible, perspectives on racial issues from other groups should be included.

# Awareness of Problematic Assumptions



- It is important for teachers to give consideration to assumptions that they may hold about the learning behaviors and capacities of students.
- Teachers may hold assumptions that are tied to students' social identity characteristics (gender, race, ethnicity, disability, language, sexual orientation, religion, political affiliation, etc.)

# Common Assumptions About Students' Learning Behaviors and Capacities



- Students will seek help when they are struggling with a class.
- Students from certain groups are not intellectual, are irresponsible, are satisfied with below average grades, lack ability, have high ability in particular subject areas. Etc.
- Students from certain backgrounds (ie. Students from urban or rural areas, students who speak with an accent, students from specific racial or ethnic groups) are poor writers.

# Common Assumptions About Students' Learning Behaviors and Capacities (cont.)



- Poor writing suggests limited intellectual ability.
- Older students or students with physical disabilities are slower learners and require more attention from the instructor.
- Students whose cultural affiliation is tied to non-English speaking groups are not native English speakers or are bilingual.

# Common Assumptions About Students' Learning Behaviors and Capacities (cont.)



- Students who are affiliated with a particular group (gender, race, ethnic, etc.) are experts on issues related to that group and feel comfortable being seen as information sources to the rest of the class and the instructor who are not members of that group. And/or European American students do not have opinions about issues of race or ethnicity and members of other groups do not have opinions about these issues.
- All students from a particular group share the same view on an issue, and their perspective will necessarily be different from the majority of the class who are not from that group.

# Common Assumptions About Students' Learning Behaviors and Capacities (cont.)



- In their reading, students will relate only to characters who resemble them
- Students from certain groups are more likely to: be argumentative or conflictual during class discussions or not participate in class discussions or bring a more radical agenda to class discussions.



# Why is it Important to Create Culturally Proficient Classrooms?



There are numerous reasons for creating culturally proficient classrooms. Listed below are a few of those reasons:

- Expose biases, stereotypes, inaccuracies, and marginalization in curricular content, pedagogy, and academic policies.
- Develop and deliver content that is fair, balanced, and accurate.
- Accommodate diverse teaching and learning styles to reach all students.
- Prepare students for a diverse workforce, clientele, and a global environment.

# Why is it Important to Create Culturally Proficient Classrooms?



- Increase sensitivity to and awareness of different cultures, and celebrate and appreciate their perspectives, heritage, and contributions.
- Undergo personal transformation and become an ally and an advocate.

# Teachers' to do List



1. Increase personal knowledge -- adding and deepening one's personal knowledge about diverse cultural issues.
2. Transform the content and structure of courses to meet the learning needs, learning styles and life experiences of a diverse student population.
3. Change the classroom interactions so as to provide a safe and more inclusive environment for all students.

# Teachers' to do List



4. Encourage students to accept themselves and others?
5. Critical reflection on the part of teachers is an essential part of the ongoing work of developing culturally proficient classrooms.
6. In the development of the culturally proficient classroom, it is important that the teacher become sensitized to their own characteristics as well as those of others.

# What's a "Culture Audit?"



A comprehensive way of assessing how well your classroom or campus is learning about and addressing culture, diversity, and global awareness in its policies, programs, and practices.

# Potential Areas to Examine



- Teacher teaming and leadership (e.g. vertical, horizontal, strengths, and interests).
- Professional development.
- Student interactions during unstructured time.
- Curriculum and teaching materials.
- Student leadership opportunities.
- Classroom teaching learning strategies.
- Community outreach programs/service learning.
- Parent programs.
- School-wide discipline and classroom management.
- Celebrations, events, rituals.
- The “hidden curriculum”— artifacts, bulletin boards, etc.
- Communications (internal & external).
- Global education themes

# How to Conduct a “Culture Audit?”



- **Document Analysis** (e.g., internal/external communications, written curriculum, policies, newsletters, websites, correspondence, brochures, etc.).
- **Statistical analysis** of demographic and achievement data (existing) to identify gaps and need areas.
- **Checklists** (e.g., check whether something is done or not).
- **Focus Groups and interviews** with various stakeholder groups (include student voice).
- **Structured Observations** of meetings, gatherings, artifacts, décor, social events, etc.) to check out “theory in use” (actual behavior).
- **Diagrams** of informal leaders, group interactions.
- **Surveys combined with other methods** to triangulate perceptual data.

# Dangers of Ignoring Culture in Educational Settings



- **Poor achievement/retention rates of some groups.**
- **Global illiteracy.**
- **Animosity between teachers; teachers and students; teachers and parents; teachers and administrators; school and community.**
- **Marginalization.**
- **Low morale, negative climate.**
- **Lack of communication and conflict resolution.**
- **Negative community image/reputation.**
- **Loss of students/teachers/funds/resources.**



# Conclusion



It is important to note that as educators, we need to be the support for each other and for students.

When the organization in which you work is supported by all, it is strong and positive student outcomes occur.

# All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten

by  
Robert Fulghum



Most of what I really need to know about how to live and what to do, and how to be, I learned in kindergarten.

Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sand pile at Sunday school.



These are the things I  
learned:

Share everything.

Play fair.

Don't hit people.

Put things back where you found them.

Clean up your own mess.



Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you.  
Live a balanced life—learn some and think  
some and  
draw and paint and sing and dance and play  
and work every day some.



Don't take things that aren't yours.  
Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.  
Wash your hands before you eat.  
Flush.



Take a nap every afternoon.  
When you go out into the world, watch out for  
traffic,  
hold hands, and stick together.  
Be aware of wonder.

# Final Performance



- Take a minute to write a positive comment or word for yourself.
- Keep the note in a place that is easily accessible.
- THANK YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!1