

**Building Culturally Proficient Learning  
Communities:  
Working Together to Engage Our Diverse  
Learners**

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## Communication Strategies

### Listen to.... Do the following

Pause – give the person time to think—give yourself time

Paraphrase \_ say what you have heard so far

Probe- Ask questions to get more information

Acknowledge – Say, Thank you for sharing \_\_\_\_\_ , it helped me \_\_\_\_\_

Effective communication involves:

1. **Listening:** Good listening skills and showing a genuine interest are attributes of a successful communicator. Sales associates who actively listen inquiries and complaints are more able to solve problems and gain customer loyalty.
2. **Use Names:** When meeting people make sure you hear the person's name and use it right away so you will remember it. If you are not sure what the person said, ask him/her to repeat it.
3. **Get to the Point:** Show value for people's time by being as concise as possible when giving information. Do not give lengthy, unnecessary details and don't make excuses for your mistakes. Answer the question and give important information only.
4. **Let Others Talk:** Don't be a person who does all the talking. What you are saying may be of interest to you only. Keep the other person in mind, giving him/her a chance to be a part of the conversation. Look for signals that you may be boring your listener and ask questions to involve them in the conversation.
5. **Non-verbal Language:** Nine-five percent of our communication is non-verbal, which includes: eye movement, tone of voice, posture, facial expressions and hand gestures. When talking to someone keeping eye contact without staring shows a sense of confidence. Be aware of non-verbal communication and keep it consistent with your message.
6. **Vocal Cues:** Do not use an excessive amount of 'filler' words (sayings or words repeated often), sounds such as "uh, um" or use lengthy pauses during conversation. The listener will lose interest in what you are saying and will become bored.
7. **Create an Atmosphere of Openness:** To establish a good relationship with customers and create a comfortable atmosphere be attentive to the number of interruptions. Give your customer/acquaintance your undivided attention by not keeping physical barriers (such as desks) between you. Avoid trying to communicate in a busy area and keep your focus on the listener.

## Barriers

- **Focusing on a personal agenda.** When we spend our listening time formulating our next response, we cannot be fully attentive to what the speaker is saying.
- **Experiencing information overload.** Too much stimulation or information can make it very difficult to listen with full attention. Try to focus on the relevant information, and the central points that are being conveyed.
- **Criticizing the speaker.** Do not be distracted by critical evaluations of the speaker. Focus on what they are saying - the message - rather than the messenger.
- **Getting distracted by emotional noise.** We react emotionally to certain words, concepts and ideas, and to a myriad of other cues from speakers (appearance, non-verbal cues). Make a conscious effort to quiet your own emotional reactions so that you can listen properly.
- **Getting distracted by external "noise".** Audible noise may be extremely distracting. Some things can be minimized – e.g., turn down the ringer on your phone, and the e-mail beep on the computer while meeting with someone. Other noises may be unavoidable – e.g., construction, other people. Also, there may be figurative "noise" from the external environment, such as distracting or inappropriate decor in a room, or environmental conditions such as the room being too hot or cold.
- **Experiencing physical difficulty.** Feeling physically unwell, or experiencing pain can make it very difficult to listen effectively. You may wish to communicate that this is not a good time, and reschedule the discussion. Otherwise, you may just need to concentrate even more on the task of listening.

## Barriers to accurate perception

- **Stereotyping and generalizing.** Be careful not to hold on to preconceptions about people or things. We often have a tendency to see what we want to see, forming an impression from a small amount of information or one experience, and assuming that to be highly representative of the whole person or situation.
- **Not investing time.** Making assumptions and ignoring details or circumstances can lead to misconceptions. When we fail to look in-depth for causes or circumstances, we miss important details, and do not allow for the complexity of the situation.
- **Having a distorted focus.** Focusing on the negative aspects of a conversation or a situation is a habit common to many people. Even though we may recognize the positive things, we often give more weight to the negative, allowing one negative comment to overshadow numerous positive ones.
- **Assuming similar interpretations.** Not everyone will draw the same conclusions from a given situation or set of information. Everybody interprets things differently. Make sure to check for other people's interpretations, and be explicit about your own.
- **Experiencing incongruent cues.** As speakers, and as listeners, we are constantly and simultaneously sending cues and receiving them from other people. Try to be consistent with your verbal cues and your body language. Do not say one thing and express something else through your body language. Be aware of how your non-verbal communication relates to your spoken words. If someone else seems to be sending a double message -- by saying one thing and expressing something else in their body language -- ask for clarification

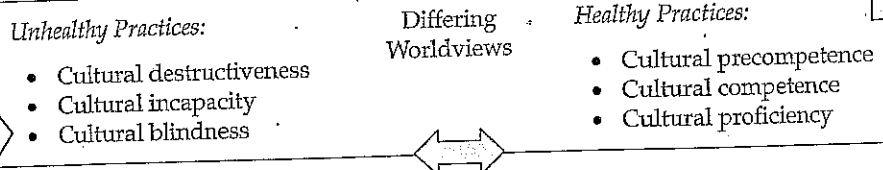
60 Understanding Cultural Proficiency

Table 4.2 The Conceptual Framework for Culturally Proficient Practices

**The Five Essential Elements of Cultural Competence**  
*Serve as standards for personal, professional values and behaviors, as well as organizational policies and practices:*

- Assessing cultural knowledge (my own and others)
- Valuing diversity
- Managing the dynamics of difference
- Adapting to diversity
- Institutionalizing cultural knowledge

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum portrays people and organizations who possess the knowledge, skills, and moral bearing to distinguish among healthy and unhealthy practices as represented by different worldviews:



Resolving the tension to do what is socially just within our diverse society leads people and organizations to view selves in terms Unhealthy and Healthy.

**Barriers to Cultural Proficiency**

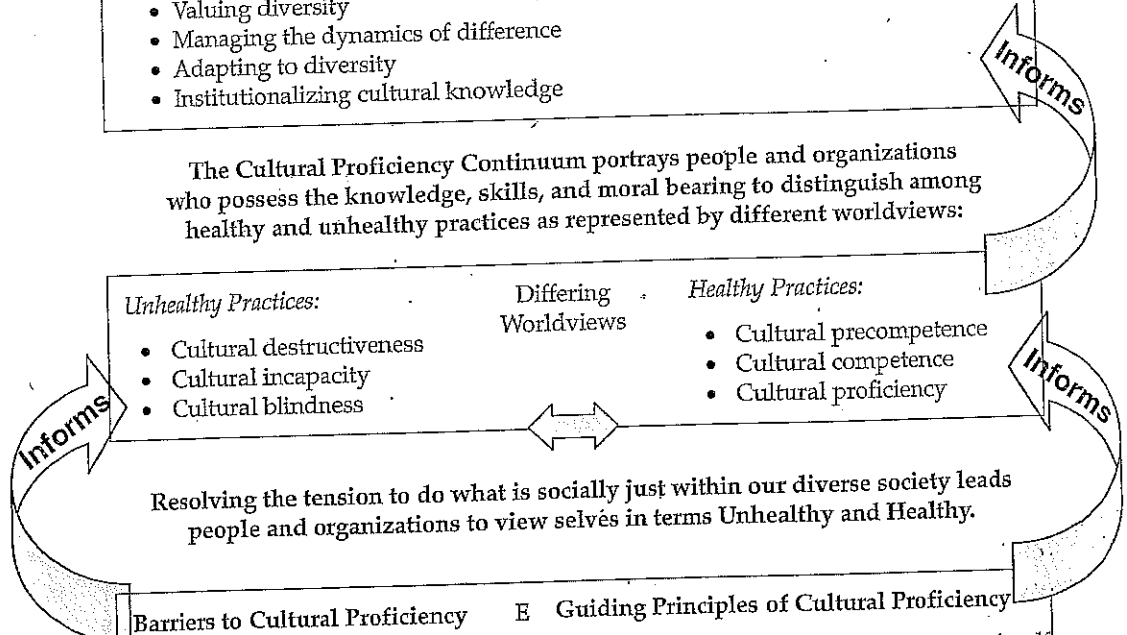
*Serve as personal, professional, and institutional impediments to moral and just service to a diverse society by*

- being resistant to change,
- being unaware of the need to adapt,
- not acknowledging systemic oppression, and
- benefiting from a sense of privilege and entitlement.

**Ethical Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency**

*Provide a moral framework for conducting one's self and organization in an ethical fashion by believing the following:*

- Culture is a predominant force in society.
- People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.
- People have individual and group identities.
- Diversity within cultures is vast and significant.
- Each cultural group has unique cultural needs.
- The best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all.
- The family, as defined by each culture, is the primary system of support in the education of children.
- School systems must recognize that marginalized populations have to be at least bicultural and that this status creates a distinct set of issues to which the system must be equipped to respond.
- Inherent in cross-cultural interactions are dynamics that must be acknowledged, adjusted to, and accepted.



## The Lens of Cultural Proficiency

Cultural Proficiency is about being effective in cross-cultural settings – issues of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, faith, ableness, socio-economics, and language acquisition. Cultural Proficiency is about educating all students to high levels through knowing, valuing and using their cultural backgrounds, languages, and learning styles within the context of our teaching. A central tenet of Cultural Proficiency holds that change is an *inside-out* process in which an educator is, first and foremost, a student of his own assumptions. One must be able to recognize one's own assumptions in order to retain those that facilitate culturally proficient actions and to change those that impede such actions. Similarly, educators apply this *inside-out* process to examine school policies and practices that either impede or facilitate Cultural Proficiency. It is this ability to examine one's self and organization that is fundamental to addressing achievement gap issues.

Cultural Proficiency provides a comprehensive, systemic structure for school leaders to discuss issues facing their schools. The four tools of Cultural Proficiency provide educators with the means to assess and change their own values and behaviors and their school's policies and practices in a way that serves our society. Cultural Proficiency has little to do with the outcomes we intend with our policies and practices and everything to do with the outcomes we actually get.

### The Four Tools of Cultural Proficiency

Cultural Proficiency is a mindset, a worldview. For those who commit to Culturally Proficient practices it represents a paradigmatic shift from viewing others as problematic to viewing how one works with people different from one's self in a manner to insure effective practices. Cultural Proficiency is comprised of an interrelated set of four tools, when used authentically, provides one the opportunity to improve one's own practice in service of others. The tools of Cultural Proficiency are **not** strategies or techniques. The tools provide you with the means by which to perform your professional responsibilities in a Culturally Proficient manner. Being culturally competent or proficient is exemplified by how one uses assessment data, delivers curriculum and instruction, interacts with parents and community members, or plans and uses professional development.

The tools of Cultural Proficiency – the guiding principles, the barriers, the continuum, and the essential elements – combine to provide you with a framework for analyzing your values and behaviors as well as your schools policies and practices.

- The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency serve as an introduction for a person or organization to identify their **core values** as they relate to issues of diversity.
- The Cultural Proficiency Continuum provides **language to describe unhealthy and healthy values and behaviors** of persons and *policies and practices* of organizations. In addition, the continuum can help you assess your current state and project your desired state. Movement along the Continuum represents a shift in thinking from holding the view of *tolerating diversity* to *transformation for equity*. This is not a subtle shift in worldview; it is paradigmatic.

- The Five Essential Elements of Cultural Competence serve as **standards** by which one develops healthy individual values/behaviors and organizational policies/practices.
- Identifying the Barriers to Cultural Proficiency provides persons and their organizations with tools to overcoming resistance to change.

**The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency.** The guiding principles provide a framework for the examination of the core values of schools and how espoused theory and theory in action differ when schools are undergoing academic self-study. The guiding principles of Cultural Proficiency, and school-based examples of each principle, are:

- Culture is a predominant force in people's and organization's lives.
- People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.
- People have group identities and individual identities.
- Diversity within cultures is vast and significant.
- Each cultural group has unique cultural needs.

The guiding principles provide a framework for how the diversity of students informs professional practice in responding to student learning needs. If your school or district has a mission, vision or beliefs statement that is a good place to see if the stated values in your school align with predominant behaviors in the school. Most likely you will encounter phrases such as *all students*, *valuing diversity*, *21<sup>st</sup> century education*, or *high tech skills*. Do leadership behaviors align with those expressed values?

**The Continuum of Cultural Proficiency.** The first three points of the continuum focuses on *them* as being problematic (i.e., Cultural Destructiveness, Cultural Incapacity, Cultural Blindness) and the next three point of the continuum focus on our *practice* (i.e., Cultural Precompetence, Cultural Competence, Cultural Proficiency). The first three points on the continuum may find us referring to our students as *under performing*, while the next three points would find us referring to the ways in which we are *under-serving* our students and their communities (the inside-out approach). The 6 points of the Continuum:

- Cultural Destructiveness – seeking to eliminate vestiges of the cultures of others.
- Cultural Incapacity – seeking to make the culture of others appear to be wrong.
- Cultural Blindness – refusing to acknowledge the culture of others.
- Cultural Precompetence – being aware of what one doesn't know about working in diverse settings. Initial levels of awareness after which a person/organization can move in positive, constructive direction or they can falter, stop and possibly regress.
- Cultural Competence – viewing one's personal and organizational work as an interactive arrangement in which the educator enters into diverse settings in a manner that is additive to cultures that are different from the educator.
- Cultural Proficiency – making the commitment to life-long learning for the purpose of being increasingly effective in serving the educational needs of

cultural groups. Holding the vision of what can be and committing to assessments that serve as benchmarks on the road to student success.

**The Five Essential Elements of Cultural Competence.** The essential elements are the standards for culturally competent values, behaviors, policies and practices:

- Assessing Cultural Knowledge – Being aware of what you know about others' cultures, about how you react to others' cultures, and what you need to do to be effective in cross-cultural situations.
- Valuing Diversity – Making the effort to be inclusive of people whose viewpoints and experiences are different from yours and will enrich conversations decision-making, and problem solving.
- Managing the Dynamics of Difference – Viewing conflict as a natural and normal process that has cultural contexts that can be understood and can be supportive in creative problem solving.
- Adapting to Diversity – Having the will to learn about others and the ability to use others' cultural experiences and backgrounds in educational settings.
- Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge – Making learning about cultural groups and their experiences and perspectives as an integral part of your on-going learning.

**Barriers to Cultural Proficiency.** In the manner that the guiding principles provide a moral compass for culturally proficient actions, there are barriers to achieving culturally proficient actions. The barriers to Cultural Proficiency are

- resistance to change,
- systems of oppression, and
- a sense of entitlement.

These barriers are often manifested in statements such as, *it is not me that needs to change. I have been a successful educator for years, these kids/parent just need to get a clue!* Similarly, it is rare to find the person who doesn't acknowledge that racism, ethnocentrism and sexism exist in our society but what they often fail to see is that when one group of people loses rights and privileges due to systemic oppression, those rights and privileges accrue to others in often unacknowledged or unrecognized ways. It is when one recognizes one's entitlement that he or she has the ability to make choices that benefit the education of children and youth.

Educational policy makers and educators when focusing on the achievement issues of non-dominant group students too often experience a conversation gap. The gap in conversation, and often unrecognized and unacknowledged, is in educators not having the perspective to see roadblocks that have been, and are, placed in the way of members of non-dominant socio-economic, racial, ethnic, gender, or language groups. This selective invisibility leads to a sense of privilege and entitlement for members of the dominant group. Whereas systems of oppression impose barriers for members of non-dominant groups, concomitant systems of privilege and entitlement impose barriers for members of the dominant group. The barriers erected by a sense of privilege and entitlement involve a skewed sense of reality that can impede one's ability to pursue

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Adapted from *Culturally Proficient Inquiry: A Lens for Identifying and Examining Educational Gaps*, (fall, 2007). Randall B. Lindsey, Stephanie Graham, R. Chris Westphal Jr., & Cynthia Jew, Thousand Oaks, CA.: Corwin Press.



ethical and moral avenues in meeting the academic and social needs of non-dominant groups.

The position of privilege often fosters educators voicing biased or ill-informed assumptions about parents from non-dominant groups. Typical of such assumptions are comments such as,

*Their parents won't come to parent conferences because they don't care about the education of their child.*

*Why try to help them, they will just end up to be gang bangers, just like their dad!*

*Why should I learn anything about their culture? This is our country, let them learn about us!*

Educators who make comments like those above are in need of different lenses, tools and structures to understand their students and the barriers they face and the special learning needs they have in order to be successful in school. Educators must engage in intentional conversations about how parents and students who are different from them behave and learn. Cultural Proficiency is an approach for surfacing assumptions and values that undermine the success of some student groups and a lens for examining how we can include and honor the cultures and learning needs of all students in the educational process..

### Cultural Proficiency Notes

Current thoughts

New thoughts

1. What is culture?

2. Why does it matter in schools?

3. What do you know about how culture/race affects learning?

4. How can you use what you know and are learning to change the outcomes of students here

# The Iceberg Concept of Culture

Like an iceberg, the majority of culture is below the surface.

## Surface Culture

Above sea level

Emotional load: relatively low

food • dress • music •  
visual arts • drama • crafts  
dance • literature • language  
celebrations • games

## Deep Culture

Unspoken Rules

Partially below sea level

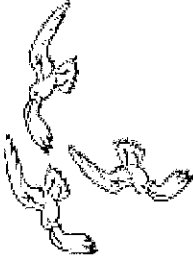
Emotional load: very high

courtesy • contextual conversational patterns • concept of time  
personal space • rules of conduct • facial expressions  
nonverbal communication • body language • touching • eye contact  
patterns of handling emotions • notions of modesty • concept of beauty  
courtship practices • relationships to animals • notions of leadership  
tempo of work • concepts of food • ideals of childrearing  
theory of disease • social interaction rate • nature of friendships  
tone of voice • attitudes toward elders • concept of cleanliness  
notions of adolescence • patterns of group decision-making  
definition of insanity • preference for competition or cooperation  
tolerance of physical pain • concept of "self" • concept of past and future  
definition of obscenity • attitudes toward dependents • problem-solving  
roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and so forth

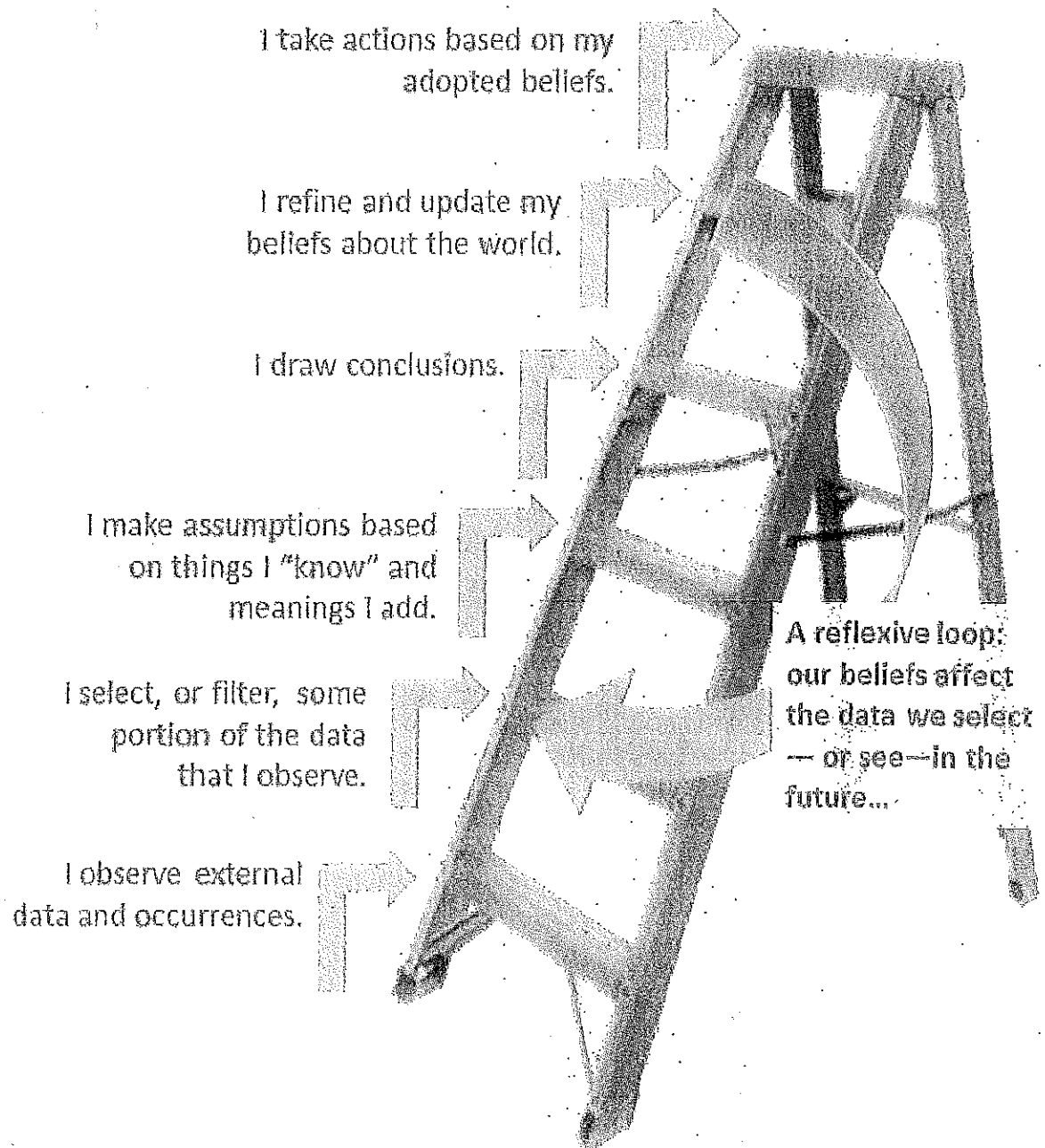
Unconscious Rules

Completely below sea level

Emotional load: intense



# The Ladder of Inference



Adapted from Chris Argyris and Peter Senge

### Essential Elements of Culturally Responsive Practice

Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell (2009), modified by Sho Shigeoka & John Lensenen

<b>Assess Culture</b> <i>Claim: your differences</i>	<b>Value Diversity</b> <i>Name: the differences</i>	<b>Manage the dynamics of difference</b> <i>Frame the conflicts caused by differences</i>	<b>Adapt to diversity</b> <i>Change to make a difference</i>	<b>Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge</b> <i>Train about differences</i>
<p>Recognize how your race and culture, as well as assumptions, beliefs, and biases, affect others and the way you lead</p>	<p>Acknowledge, respect and encourage the presence of various cultural/racial groups and individuals and their perspectives in all aspects of your organization</p>	<p>Learn effective strategies for resolving conflict and managing differences, particularly among people whose racial and cultural backgrounds and values differ from your own</p>	<p>Change the way things are done to acknowledge the differences that are present in the staff, students, and community</p>	<p>Incorporate cultural knowledge into the mainstream of the organization</p>
<p>Describe the culture and the cultural norms of your organization in the context of teaching, learning, and leadership</p>	<p>Recognize racial and cultural differences as assets rather than as problems to be solved in your organization</p>	<p>Understand the effect of sociopolitical, systemic treatment of those who are racially and culturally different from your own has on present-day interactions</p>	<p>Develop skills for intercultural communication</p>	<p>Teach the origins of stereotypes and prejudices</p>
<p>Understand how the culture and cultural norms of your organization affects those with different cultures in the context of teaching, learning, and leadership</p>	<p>Accept that each racial and cultural group finds some values and behaviors more important than others, while recognizing individual differences and similarities</p>	<p>Realize that you may misjudge others' actions based on learned expectations</p>	<p>Institutionalize cultural interventions for conflicts and confusion caused by the dynamics of difference</p>	<p>For staff development and education, integrate into your systems information and skills that enable all to interact effectively in a variety of inter-racial and cultural situations</p>

Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency

1. Assess culture
2. Value diversity
3. Manage the dynamics of difference
4. Adapt to diversity
5. Institutionalize cultural knowledge

## The Cultural Proficiency Continuum Self-Assessment

Read each of the points on the continuum, *presented in italics*, and the indicators that follow. Place a mark in the column that best matches your ability to describe how culture is regarded. Please treat this instrument as a needs assessment, not a test to be passed. For the instrument to have value for you, it must provide you with a profile of what you already know and what you have yet to learn.

### The Continuum for Cultural Proficiency

The Continuum and Indicators	Yes	No	Not Sure
<p><b>Cultural Destructiveness</b> – <i>I can describe how cultures that are different from mine are negated, disparaged, or purged by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describing how systems of oppression (i.e., racism, sexism, homophobia) are represented in the history of our country</li> <li>• describing how historical oppression is usually invisible in our history and literature texts</li> <li>• describing how the invisibility of culture in schools leads to non-dominant groups not being viewed as legitimate</li> <li>• describing one specific example of cultural destructiveness in our school/program</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Cultural Incapacity</b> – <i>I can describe how my cultural values and beliefs can be elevated and how cultures that are different from mine can be suppressed by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describing how superiority and inferiority are represented in the history of our country (e.g. Jim Crow laws and the need for civil rights acts, school desegregation)</li> <li>• describing discriminatory practices present in some educational settings</li> <li>• describing instances of low expectations held by educators</li> <li>• describing examples of subtle messages to people that they are not valued</li> </ul>			

The Continuum and Indicators	Yes	No	Not Sure
<p><b>Cultural Blindness</b> – <i>I can describe how I can act to not see differences among cultures and to not recognize differences by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describing how the messages that people intend to send are often not what is heard by others</li> <li>• describing the value placed in this country on pretending not to see difference</li> <li>• describing how textbooks do not include the meaningful representation of non-dominant groups</li> <li>• describing how we use expressions such as you need to work a little harder and don't be so sensitive to dismiss people's struggles</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Cultural Precompetence</b> – <i>I can describe how my lack of knowledge, experience, and understanding of other cultures limits my ability to interact with people whose cultures are different from mine by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• giving examples of the frustration of knowing that current practices are not effective and not knowing what to do</li> <li>• describing instances of jumping to easy solutions that have no sustaining effect</li> <li>• describing the paradigmatic shift that occurs when moving from talking about others as being the problem to discussing how one changes their practices to meet the needs of people from other cultural groups</li> <li>• describing the movement at this point in the continuum as representing a tipping point</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Cultural Competence</b> – <i>I can describe my use of the essential elements as standards for adapting my behavior by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• describing how I am aware of the impact my culture has on others</li> <li>• describing how valuing diversity is different from tolerance</li> <li>• describing how one adapts to diversity in order to be effective</li> <li>• describing how one uses the essential elements to leverage change, personally, and organizationally</li> </ul>			



The Continuum and Indicators	Yes	No	Not Sure
<p><b>Cultural Proficiency</b> – <i>I can describe my constructive experiences in a variety of cultural settings by:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• describing how learning about cultures is a life-long process</li><li>• describing examples of advocacy as a moral construct</li><li>• describing examples of esteeming the cultures of others</li><li>• describing how one learns about the cultures of others, including organizational cultures</li></ul>			

**Score Sheet**

There is no score sheet in the traditional sense. The purpose of the exercise is for you to have the opportunity to reflect on what you know and value prior to coaching others. Please accept our invitation to reflect on the marks and comments you entered into the Yes, No, and Not Sure columns.

**Reflection**

Take a few moments and review the six points on the Continuum, the indicators and the columns you marked for each point. What was your reaction to the first three points of the continuum? What was your reaction to the next three points of the continuum?  
What did you learn about yourself in doing this activity?

**Behaviors Along the Continuum**

		<i>Parent-Community Involvement ("parent" includes parent/community in all cases)</i>		
<i>Destructiveness</i>	<i>"See the difference; stomp it out."</i>	Prevent diverse parent group involvement.	Block, prevent, and sabotage meaningful communication with some parent groups.	Ignore, intimidate, sabotage, or punish expression of needs of diverse parents.  Block, prevent, or sabotage discussion of allocating or decisions to allocate resources to meet the needs of diverse parent groups.
<i>Incapacity</i>	<i>"See the difference; make it wrong."</i>	Discourage meaningful involvement from diverse parent groups.	Communication is predominantly one way, in English, and in writing. Communication focuses on school rules and policies and may contain jargon, terms, or acronyms not understood by parents. Specific home-school communication is often reserved for disciplinary or other school compliance issues.	Intentionally/unintentionally instigate competition for resources among diverse parent groups.
<i>Blindness</i>	<i>"See the difference; act like you don't."</i>	Do not offer specific opportunities for or support to involve diverse parent groups, believing that doing so may promote divisiveness.	Disseminate newsletters/bulletins about school policies, calendar events, and volunteer opportunities to all. Translation may only be offered in one language other than English, often resulting in one-way communication between school and diverse parents.	Promote/support parent agendas that represent the status quo or align with school district needs without acknowledging diverse needs.  Promote equal sharing of resources among all groups, regardless of need or expression of need.

(Continued)

(Continued)

		<i>Parent-Community Involvement ("parent" includes parent/community in all cases)</i>			
<i>Precompetence</i>	<i>"See the difference; respond inappropriately."</i>	Facilitate ability of diverse parent groups to navigate the educational system.	School newsletters, bulletins, and meetings are translated for some parent groups but not others. Promoting agendas of some parents groups but not others results in inconsistent or uneven parent participation.	Learn about diverse parents and some of their needs, sometimes in indirect or inauthentic ways.	Identify and promote resources to meet the needs of some diverse parent groups, perhaps inconsistently.
<i>Competence</i>	<i>"See the difference; value it."</i>	Evidence exists of ongoing opportunities for meaningful interaction and participation of diverse parent groups in school programs and decisions.	Evidence exists of translating and interpreting all school communications and meetings for all language groups in the parent community, allowing all diverse parent groups to share meaningful information and collaborate with the school to improve the education of their children.	Evidence exists of learning about diverse parent groups and their needs in authentic ways and of increased involvement and collaboration with parents.	Evidence exists of promoting resources to help parents become successful partners in educating their children.

<p><i>Proficiency</i></p>	<p><i>"Seek difference; esteem it; advocate for equity."</i></p>	<p>All parents and community members participate as important school and district discussions and decisions.</p>	<p>Encourage and facilitate opportunities for diverse parent groups to meet on their own, in affinity groups, between and within cultures, and with school district partners to identify and eliminate barriers to meaningful parent communication and encourage involvement in school/district discussions and decisions.</p>	<p>Identify and address the needs of all parent groups in school/district meetings, communications, and decisions.</p>	<p>Identify and allocate resources needed for all diverse parents to help narrow and close educational gaps for their children, as well as for other underserved groups in the educational community.</p>
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*Parent-Community Involvement ("parent" includes parent/community in all cases)*

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*Culturally proficient systems consider...*

Family/Community

Curriculum

Pedagogy/Practice

Policies

REFLECTION

Handwriting practice lines consisting of multiple horizontal lines for writing.

6

# The Second Tool

## The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency

*Accepting diversity enables us to see that each of us is needed. It also enables us to abandon ourselves to the strengths of others, acknowledging that we cannot know or do everything on our own.*

—Max De Free, U.S. writer on leadership, as quoted in Zadra (2008, p. 37)

Bill Fayette, the superintendent of the Coolidge district, has hired a diversity consultant, James Harris, to provide training for faculty on cultural proficiency. At the first staff development session, James explains the underlying principles that inform his approach to dealing with the issues that emerge in a diverse environment. He also explains that the response to these issues usually falls within one of four categories:

- Right the wrongs: Some people are angry or have a strong sense of justice. If something is wrong, they think that it should be fixed immediately and, if necessary, the wrongdoers should be punished.
- The golden rule: These people want everyone to get along. "if we all just treated everyone equally, with courtesy and kindness, there wouldn't be a problem," they say.

- My pain equals yours: Then there are those who say, "Everyone has been discriminated against about something. I got over it, so should they. We need to forget the past and move forward."
- Oppression Olympics: These people recognize that every group has suffered some form of discrimination. They are, however, certain that the group they are in has suffered the most and should not be minimized by discussing anyone else's alleged experiences of oppression.

"Each of these perspectives has some serious drawbacks," says James, "and each one also is useful." He presents the group with a list of comments he has collected from teachers and administrators in a number of districts:

Doesn't focusing on differences just make it harder for us to get along?

I don't have a culture. I'm just a generic person. Heinz 57 American.

He sure didn't sound black on the phone when we talked.

I didn't know there were Chinese people over six feet tall.

You are different, but we're comfortable with you.

We would have more of your kind around if they were just like you.

Why do they have to have a special program?

I think everyone should be given the same attention and information. That's fair.

It's the culture of that school that needs to be changed! After all, what can you expect from a school in that community?

James uses these comments to illustrate the need for the guiding principles of cultural proficiency.

## THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

James had studied culture and diversity in the context of P-12 education and embraced the guiding principles of cultural proficiency for his personal work and for his work with educational institutions. The principles that James shared with his Coolidge colleagues, from Cross's (1989) minimal work, are as follows:

- Culture is a predominant force.
- People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.
- People have individual and group identities.
- Diversity within cultures is vast and significant.
- Each cultural group has unique cultural needs.
- The best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all.

Marginalized populations have to at least be bi-cultural

• The family, as defined by each culture, is the primary system of support in the education of children.

- School systems must recognize that marginalized populations have to be at least bicultural and that this status creates a distinct set of issues to which the system must be equipped to respond.
- Inherent in cross-cultural interactions are dynamics that must be acknowledged, adjusted to, and accepted.

Prominently placed in most of the schools we have worked in, usually in a beautiful frame, is the organization's mission and values. In some school districts, employees wear identification badges; often laminated on the back of the ID is a list of the district's mission statement and/or core values. In every public place and in the staff lounge are statements that say what the district believes in and how it intends to treat people. We usually find a noticeable difference in the espoused values of the school or district and the practices of the educators in that district, and another gap between the practices and how they are experienced by the students and their families. Our interest is not only how people are treated as members of cultural groups but in how the district's and the schools' cultures are communicated to groups that are not part of the dominant culture.

We spend the initial hours of our time with clients assessing the culture of their organizations. As part of a cultural proficiency inquiry, we examine personnel policies, look at memos sent to employees, and listen to people as they tell us what it is like to work at that particular school or in that particular district office. Invariably, a disconnection exists between what the district says it is and how the employees, the parents/guardians, the students, or the community members experience the district. In simple things like the personnel policy, we see major conflicts. The values statements speak of trust, honesty, harmony, and cocreation. The personnel policies are written in legalistic terms from the underlying assumption that employees cannot be trusted and must fear punishment so they won't do anything wrong.

Clients—in this case, students and their families—tell us how they are treated as unwelcome interlopers in the school community. Office staffs complain that if it weren't for the students, they would be able to get their work done. Students tell of teachers who are rude, insulting, and vindictive while demanding unquestioning obedience and extreme deference from the same students whom they oppress through their abuse of power and position. Now you may be thinking something like this:

- This doesn't happen where I work; or
- You must be citing extreme cases; or
- There is a reason that these things happen. After all, we can't . . .

In many cases, you have significant and valid points to make. The point that we seek to make here with you is that if you say that you represent an

open, inclusive, learning community that values all people and their contributions, then everything that you do and say must reflect that. There cannot be a disconnection between what you say you are or want to be and how you behave on a daily basis. Your character is who you are underneath, not how you are when everything is peaceful and going smoothly. Moreover, if only one teacher or one person in the front office is the cause of complaints from your clients, and (a) no one knows about it or (b) there are no checks in the system to stop it, then your school or office is culturally blind or worse.

It is easy to articulate good values as an expression of the culture of your school. It is much harder to incorporate those values into all of the systems and structures of your school and district. It is even harder as a leader to hold the people in the organization accountable for policies, practices, and procedures that are consistent with the mission and the values of the organization. If you can do this, then you not only have learned the importance of a strong core culture, but you also have learned how to create an environment where all members of the community understand their role in maintaining it. What we look for is not what you say but what you do. A tool that will help you close this gap is the Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency.

## CULTURAL PROFICIENCY AS AN EXPRESSION OF VALUES

Your worldview is an expression of the world in which you want to live. It is an expression of your belief about the world as it should be. It is an expression of your core values. Whether your core values are derived from a religious creed, spiritual beliefs, or secular understanding, you have a mind-set that shapes and informs how you assess your behavior as well as the behavior of others. When you come together with other educators in the place called school, your shared values represent your organizational worldview.

In this chapter, we describe a worldview that is in sharp contrast to the deficit model worldview described in Chapter 5. Cultural proficiency as a worldview is a model for a system of people and organizations committed to healthy and effective cross-cultural interaction. In our work, we have witnessed educators and schools undergo major shifts in thinking (i.e., paradigm shifting) as they moved from viewing differences in culture as problematic to examining and applying ways in which they could be successful with people culturally different from themselves or the dominant group.

When educators and schools make this transformative shift in thinking and behaving, the principles of cultural proficiency guide their professional practice. They become more mindful of their own values and behaviors and the policies and practices of their school or district, from the classroom to the grade levels or departments to the organization in its entirety.

## PRINCIPLE: CULTURE IS EVER PRESENT

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You cannot *not* have a culture. Nor can there be an environment that is culture-free or without cultural bias. Culture is like the air; it is everywhere, and you don't notice it until it changes. People in dominant groups often say that they don't notice culture. And that is the main point. If you are in the dominant group, you don't have to pay attention to cultural norms and cultural expectations. You just know what they are. Just as you know the rules for riding in a public elevator or the rules for entering a concert that is in progress, if you are part of the group that makes the rules, you know them intuitively. That is part of your privilege, and it is a source of your power. You know what to do. Culturally proficient educators recognize that what they experience as normal or regular is part of their culture. This may create a sense of entitlement, but by recognizing these feelings, they can then acknowledge and appreciate the subtle cultural differences among members of the dominant culture.

Your culture is a defining aspect of your humanity. It is the predominant force in shaping values and behaviors. Occasionally, you may be inclined to take offense at behaviors that differ from yours, but as a culturally proficient leader, remind yourself that offensive behavior may not be personal; it may be cultural. Recognize that members of emerging majority populations have to be at least bicultural, and this creates its own set of issues, problems, and possible conflicts.

All people who are not a part of the dominant group have already gained competence in one culture before they began to learn standard forms of English or dominant cultural norms. Therefore, when members of dominated cultures resist or hesitate in using the language or cultural norms of the dominant culture, they are not necessarily ignorant or incompetent; rather, they simply may be using language or cultural behaviors with which they are more familiar or more comfortable. The culturally proficient leader remembers that culture—the culture of the individuals and the culture of the organization—is always a factor.

## PRINCIPLE: PEOPLE ARE SERVED IN VARYING DEGREES BY THE DOMINANT CULTURE

Common knowledge is not common, and things are only self-evident to those who share your worldview and culture perspective. Just because a person is working in the school district or a child has made it to the fifth grade doesn't mean that they have learned all of the rules—the cultural expectations—that the dominant group uses as criteria for success. Think about the last time someone new joined your staff. Although most people made gestures of welcome and courtesy, there was also a bit of standing back to watch and wait. You wanted to see who this person was and



whether he or she would fit in. After three or four days, you could hear people saying, *Boy, she is really great, or, Well, he's not going to last long around here.* These comments reflect the unconscious evaluation of the person by using the cultural expectations of the group as the criteria for determining the person's fit, or success.

Imagine what it would be like to welcome someone into the school, by saying, *Here's the personnel policy manual, and here are the employee procedures, and here are our cultural expectations—our practices. Read these practices first, and when they contradict something in the other two documents, go with the cultural expectations. That is how we really do things around here.* It's hard to imagine, but that is what would happen in a culturally proficient organization. Moreover, before inviting new people into the community, there would be a conscious effort to align the policies and procedures with the practices. Additionally, as the group became diverse, the policies, procedures, and practices would be examined to eliminate unintentionally discriminating policies and practices.

Culturally proficient educators adjust their behaviors and values to accommodate the full range of diversity represented by their school populations. They recognize that some individuals from minority cultures find success in varying degrees in schools where only the dominant culture is acknowledged and valued. Although educators and students in the dominant culture may profit from such a setting, and members of some dominated groups may do well despite such a setting, many other students and educators will find such an atmosphere stifling and limiting. Such an imbalance of power puts the total burden for change on one person or group. Culturally proficient leaders see the need to ensure that members of dominant groups, dominated groups, and emerging groups share the responsibility for change.

### PRINCIPLE: PEOPLE HAVE GROUP IDENTITIES AND PERSONAL IDENTITIES

A common experience among people of historically oppressed groups is the *model minority syndrome*. This occurs when one member of the dominated group learns the cultural norms of the dominant group. Because model minorities are bicultural, they can assimilate into the dominant culture without causing discomfort to those in the power group and without calling attention to their difference. The guest, not the host, does all of the accommodation. The only acknowledgment of this syndrome is when one of the members of the dominant group says something like this:

- *You know, you aren't like the other \_\_\_\_\_ . You're different. or*
- *You seem to fit right in. or*
- *Your English is so good, I can understand everything you say. or*
- *You read speech so well that I totally forget that you are deaf.*

Although these comments are meant to be compliments, they are not. They are insulting, because they deny that the person has any connection or identification with the group being denigrated. In essence, these statements say, *Thanks for selling out. I can tolerate you because you act just like me.*

It is important to treat all people as individuals, as well as to acknowledge each group's identity. It demeans and insults individuals and their cultures to single out particular assimilated members of ethnic groups and to tell them that they differ from members of their own group, implying that their differentness somehow makes them better than others of their group—or more acceptable to the dominant group. Culturally proficient leaders know that to guarantee the dignity of each person, they must also preserve the dignity of each person's culture.

Often, so-called personality problems are actually problems of cultural differences. Culturally proficient leaders address these problems. They recognize that cultural differences in thought patterns (e.g., those of non-Western, non-European people versus those of Westerners) reflect differing but equally valid ways of viewing and solving problems. No cultural group appears exclusively to use just one particular approach for processing information and solving problems. Although some cultures are traditionally associated with one approach more than others, there is no evidence that one approach is superior to others across all situations. Culturally proficient leaders recognize these and other cultural differences, and they use this knowledge to promote effective communication among diverse people.



### PRINCIPLE: DIVERSITY WITHIN CULTURES IS IMPORTANT

A prospective client who was responsible for "minority recruitment" to an exclusive postsecondary school said to us that she was not going to be successful because the bus lines didn't run past the school. She assumed that all people of color were poor and would be riding the bus if they attended the school. She did not realize that within any group are vast differences in wealth, income, education, and lifestyle. Because diversity within cultures is as important as diversity between cultures, it is important to learn about ethnic groups not as monoliths (e.g., Asians, Latinos, or whites) but as the complex and diverse groups that they are. Within each major ethnic group are many distinctive subgroups. Although a significant portion of a historically oppressed group may occupy the lower rungs of the socioeconomic ladder, within each group is great diversity. Often, because of the class differences in the United States, there is greater commonality across ethnic lines, between groups that share the same socioeconomic status (SES), than there is within an ethnic group between the upper and lower SES of that group.

For example, upper-middle-class U.S. citizens of European, African, and Japanese descent are more likely to share values and similar worldviews than members of any one ethnic group who come from socioeconomic backgrounds varying from working class to upper class. For the client to be successful in her recruitment, she would need to know this and know how to access people of color who fit the socioeconomic profile of those who attend the school. Culturally proficient leaders recognize these intracultural differences and provide their faculty, staff, students, and parents with access to information about people who are not like themselves in various ways. Culturally proficient schools create an environment that fosters trust, safety, and the inclusion of all people who work and learn there.

**PRINCIPLE: EACH GROUP HAS UNIQUE CULTURAL NEEDS THAT MUST BE RESPECTED**

There was a time in the history of educational practices when all children were expected to dress, talk, and respond to their teachers in the same way. Adults who are creative, intuitive, extremely bright, or dyslexic often talk about the horrible experiences they had in school because they didn't conform to the one-size-fits-all mode of education that was offered to them. They grew up thinking they were defective in some way because they could not learn the way they were being taught. In the past 50 years, educators have learned to acknowledge in their curricula and in their teaching different learning styles, different cognitive styles, and the different ways people process information. Still, some schools refuse to change their policies to adapt to differences in grooming needs, dietary restrictions, or physical accommodations.

European Americans can assume that a public school in Canada or the United States will have information about the history and culture of their people, as well as about their countries of origin. Other citizens and immigrants cannot make such assumptions. The desire to learn about oneself and one's people is unique only in that each group wants different information. Additionally, schools may be invited to accommodate students in large and small ways—all of which are significant to the people who are not in the dominant group. These changes in how things are done are also teachable moments for members of the dominant groups to learn about others. The culturally proficient educator teaches and encourages col-leagues who are members of the dominant culture to make the necessary adaptations in how they provide educational services so that all people have access to the same benefits and privileges as members of the dominant group in society.

**PRINCIPLE: THE FAMILY, AS DEFINED BY EACH CULTURE, IS THE PRIMARY SYSTEM OF SUPPORT IN THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN**

The traditional relationship between home and school is to place most of the responsibilities for involvement directly with parents. White that holds true for most cultural groups, cultural proficiency provides a different frame of reference by which teachers, parents, and education leaders assume greater responsibility for finding authentic ways to engage in culturally proficient practices to support student achievement. Traditional approaches to parent involvement have parents coming to the school to demonstrate their care and concern for their children within the school setting. Culturally proficient practice assumes the school setting includes the community and parents.

We find that too often educators and parents have different perceptions of the often-used term *parent participation*. When the educators and the parents are from different socioeconomic, racial, or ethnic cultural groups, often they have different perceptions of this term. Lawson (2003) used the terms *communitycentric* and *schoolcentric* to describe these contrasting perceptions:

- *Communitycentric*—"Parents involved in activities that meet the basic needs of their children such as going to school well fed, rested, and clean."
- *Schoolcentric*—"Parents involved in activities that are structured and defined for parents by schools" (p. 79).

Effective and meaningful partnerships between parents and schools require sensitive, respectful, and caring school leaders who are willing to learn the positive nature and culture of the community, as well as identify barriers that have impeded progress in school-community relations. The elementary school in Sacramento, California, located in a low income neighborhood (mentioned in Chapter 5) is an example of a school that, once educators identified their core values about parent/guardian involvement to include culturally proficient practices, has been successful in engaging parents in productive ways through home and other off-site meetings.

Furthermore, there are multiple definitions of *family*. In the traditional, often stereotypic, image of European American homes, the family has been identified as one mother, one father, and the children. However, there are many other family configurations—single-parent, multiple-generation extended family, same gender parents, foster care, and residential care

homes. Whatever the configuration for the children in our schools, their family is their family.

**PRINCIPLE: PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT A PART OF THE DOMINANT CULTURE HAVE TO BE AT LEAST BICULTURAL**

Parents have to be fluent in the communication patterns of the school, as well as the communication patterns that exist in their communities. They also have to know the cultural norms and expectations of schools, which may conflict or be different from those in their communities, their countries of origin, or their cultural groups. In ideal conditions, their children are developing bicultural skills, learning to code switch appropriately as the cultural expectations of their environments change, yet parents may not have these skills. They are then penalized because they do not respond as expected to the norms set by educators, nor do they negotiate well the educational systems of the public schools.

**PRINCIPLE: INHERENT IN CROSS-CULTURAL INTERACTIONS ARE SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATION DYNAMICS THAT MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED, ADJUSTED TO, AND ACCEPTED**

People who belong to groups that have histories of systemic oppressions have heightened sensitivities to the societal privileges they do not receive and to the many unacknowledged slights and put-downs that they receive daily. These microaggressions are usually unnoticed by dominant group members and, when brought to their attention, are often dismissed as inconsequential. Cumulatively, microaggressions create the same hurt and oppressive environment as an activity or policy that is obviously at the culturally destructive end of the continuum. The historical mistrust that emanates from a national history of racism, ethnocentrism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, ableism, and discrimination based on religion and spiritual beliefs is usually more obvious to the members of targeted groups than members of agent groups. Awareness of issues of systemic oppression by all educators is fundamental to effective cross-cultural communication.

Historically marginalized populations face many issues. For example, children from marginalized populations are vastly overrepresented in special education programs and woefully underrepresented in advanced placement or gifted and talented programs. In too many cases, educators try to explain to parents that placing children in special education or

"opportunity" programs is in the best interest of the child. Likewise, underrepresentation in gifted programs is associated with failure to score adequately on standardized tests, which tend to favor European American populations. The issue facing parents in either of these scenarios is that the burden of proof is implicitly assigned to them to prove that their child does not belong in special education or does qualify for gifted programs. Educators aware of such dynamics employ strategies and tactics that engage parents as partners in beneficial placements for their children.

**PRINCIPLE: THE SCHOOL SYSTEM MUST INCORPORATE CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE INTO PRACTICE AND POLICYMAKING**

Culturally proficient educators are self-consciously aware of their own cultures and the culture of their schools. This is crucial knowledge, because in addition to the cognitive curriculum, the cultural norms and expectations of the school must be taught as well. Each time a student or parent fails to respond appropriately to a cultural norm, they are judged and penalized. Judgmental comments are usually prefaced with "It is common sense..." "Everyone knows that..." "It's the parents' responsibility to teach their kids..." "Well, they should have known..." All of these comments reflect assumptions made by members of a dominant (alpha) group as they witness marginalized outsiders experiencing conflicts with the dominant culture.

First, culturally proficient educators must assess and raise consciousness about their own individual and organizational cultures. Then, as they teach the cultural expectations of the school and classroom to all students and their families, educators must learn about the cultures of their students. When educators begin the process of learning what they need to know about the cultural groups they serve, we often hear, *How can we possibly learn about all of the cultural groups in our district? We have to teach, too!* Cultural learning can be daunting, but it is important and it is possible to learn enough to make a difference. One way is to engage the community, identifying people who know both cultures and can serve as a bridge for the educators. Another is to identify other experts who can provide needed information. And finally, and most easily, if educators use their own expertise, sharing information and institutionalizing it, individual knowledge will ultimately become institutional knowledge.

An example is an elementary school in Roseville, California, that had experienced a sustained immigration of families from the Ukraine and Russia. In addition to learning about Ukrainian and Russian cultural practices in their professional development sessions, educators devoted a full-day professional development day to visiting three sites within the community and talking with local business and church leaders. Not only

REFLECTION

did they learn a bit more about these new immigrants, but more important, they demonstrated to their clients' communities a willingness to go to the communities to learn.

In Anaheim, California, teachers are regularly making home visits to teach parents what they need to know about the schools, at the same time learning more about the students' communities and cultures. They share what they have learned and taught informally and formally in professional development sessions. Of course, professional development sessions at school and in the field, though valuable, are only a first step. The follow-up steps have to include the involvement of members of the community in purposeful decision-making activities in the school for their voices to be heard and to facilitate meaningful contact with other parents/guardians.

MAKE IT COUNT

The tools of cultural proficiency assist you in shifting the culture of the organization. This is not something that can take place after a few staff development sessions; it requires commitment at the top, accountability systems at the bottom, and an ongoing intention of everyone to pay attention to the things that count. According to a popular legend, Albert Einstein had a sign in his office that said, "People spend too much time counting things that don't count, and not counting the things that do." Nicely framed values statements don't count. Educators who consistently model courtesy and respect to one another and to all of their students do count. A beautifully articulated mission statement doesn't count if there is no relationship between the mission and the programs that operate on a daily basis or if the front office staff does not see its work as one of the ways in which the mission is fulfilled.

By deliberately and systematically implementing the behavior outlined in the essential elements of cultural proficiency, your school or district can become culturally proficient. To carry out this ambitious task, you need strong core organizational values (Collins & Porras, 1997; Senge et al., 2000). In addition to the values you currently hold, you can use the values of cultural proficiency—the guiding principles—as the foundation on which you re-create your classroom, your school, or your district.

GOING DEEPER

1. Take the statements made by the educators in the case study and decide which of the guiding principles apply to each.
2. As you reflect on how your school or district responds to the issues of diversity, can you cite examples of counting what doesn't count? Can you identify some things that should be counted?

## Enhancing Cultural Competence- Community Toolbox

### 1. Define Your Vision and Goals for Cultural Competence

- a. Indicate what cultural competence would look like and the related goals for your organization or community.
  - i. Describe the vision for cultural competence - What qualities your organization or community would have when it becomes more culturally competent. These vision statements might include:
    - a. People of diverse backgrounds and experience working together.
    - b. People understanding and appreciating one another's differences.
    - c. People being respectful of those different from them.

*What is your organization or community's vision for cultural competence?*

- ii. For each relevant level indicate the goal for cultural competence:
  - a. Individual level - increase respectful engagement by yourself or other members
  - b. Organizational level - change policy and practices to enhance inclusion and respectful engagement with different groups.
  - c. Program level - redesign programs or intervention so that they are more effective and a better fit with cultural beliefs and practices.
  - d. Community level - increase respectful engagement among those from diverse cultures and decrease intolerant practices by community members.
  - e. *What will your goal for cultural competence be at the:*

*Individual level:*

*Organizational level:*

*Program level:*

*Community level:*

### 2. Conduct a Cultural Audit

- a. Describe the cultural context of your organization or community
  - i. Identify the different cultures or shared experiences represented in the organization, group, and community in which you belong or work. These may include groups that differ in: (fill in those that are appropriate for your organization or group)

- Nationality
  - Ethnicity
  - Native language
  - Race
  - Gender
  - Religion or spiritual beliefs
  - Occupational Status
  - Educational Status
  - Economic status or social class
  - Physical attributes
  - Relationship Status
  - Age group
  - Geographical/regional residency
  - Health status
  - Others specific to a group
- ii. Identify the current expectations and stereotypes in your group or community about people from each of these cultures, and how these stereotypes might affect communication and your ability to work together. Examples of stereotypes, which can be positive, negative, or neutral, may include:
- Hardworking or lazy
  - Family-oriented or work-focused
  - Withholding or generous
  - Expressive or quiet
  - Suspicious of strangers, unfriendly, or open and warm
  - Aggressive or gentle
  - Emotional or unfeeling
  - Traditional or open to change
  - Intelligent or ignorant

*List those cultural groups within your community or organization and the possible stereotypes that affect how you communicate or work with them:*

- b. Characterize the current relationships among cultures within your organization, group, or community:
- i. What cultures are represented in your organization currently? which ones are excluded?
  - ii. What kinds of relationships are already established among cultural groups?
  - iii. How well are different cultural groups well organized?
  - iv. What kinds of conflicts or struggles currently exist among cultural groups?  
What historical events set the stage for the current conflict?
  - v. How well are conflicts between groups openly recognized and talked about?
  - vi. Over which issues in the community have different cultural groups historically worked together to make improvements?
  - vii. Have there been or are there efforts to strengthen alliances among groups?

- viii. What values and concerns do different cultural groups have in common?
- c. Assess the level of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors related to cultural competence of those in your organization or community:
- i. Knowledge of the characteristics, experiences, beliefs, values, and norms of the cultural group(s) of interest.
  - ii. Respect for these cultural elements without assumptions of superiority or inferiority.
  - iii. Behavioral skills for working with people from different cultures.
  - iv. Presence of supportive relationships within the culture, and among with whom you are working and in your own culture.
  - v. The state of curiosity, appreciation of your limited knowledge, and a commitment to learn about others.
  - vi. Awareness of how your own culture and experiences have shaped how you see others.
- d. Identify possible difficulties (or opportunities) you or your organization may encounter due to cultural differences. Describe how differences in the varied aspects listed will affect your ability to understand and work effectively with diverse cultural groups:
- i. Communication styles
    - Language usage (e.g., formal, street language).
    - Non-verbal communication (e.g., eye contact, gestures).
    - Assertiveness expressed.

*What difficulties (or opportunities) may your group encounter due to different communication styles?*
  - i. Attitudes toward conflict
    - Positive or negative.
    - Face-to-face or less direct methods of resolution.

*What difficulties (or opportunities) may your group encounter due to different conflict styles?*
  - ii. Approaches to completing tasks
    - Orientation toward task (e.g., focus on getting things done).
    - Orientation towards relationships (e.g., focus on how people are feeling).

*What difficulties (or opportunities) may your group encounter due to different task completion styles?*
  - iii. Decision-making styles
    - Delegation or tightly held decision-making powers.
    - Consensus, majority rule or other forms of group involvement.

*What difficulties (or opportunities) may your group encounter due to different decision-making styles?*

- iv. Attitudes about open emotional and personal matters  
Variations in comfort level in disclosure (e.g., willingness to talk about self or relationships).
    - Need for privacy or preference for openness.
    - Inclusion of emotion or personal issues in decisions.

*What difficulties (or opportunities) may your group encounter due to different disclosure styles?*
  - v. Approaches to knowing
    - Analytical (head, thinking) or intuitive (heart, feeling).
    - Statistics, facts and science; or symbols, stories, and spirit.

*What difficulties (or opportunities) may your group encounter due to different approaches to knowing?*
- e. Assess the level of cultural competence (i.e., ability to respectfully engage those from different cultures or backgrounds) of your organization or community. Consider the current practice or ability to:
- i. Be involved and comfortable with people from different cultures and backgrounds.
  - ii. Show genuine respect for others who are different.
  - iii. Work effectively with people from different cultures and backgrounds.
  - iv. Link to networks of people and groups from different cultures and backgrounds.

### 3. Build a Culturally Competent Organization

- a. Based on the cultural audit or assessment, identify goals for enhancing the cultural competence of your organization. For each goal (see potential goals below) indicate what "success" would look like if the goal were attained:
  - i. Proclaiming Your Dream: Developing Vision and Mission Statements
  - ii. Increase people's involvement and comfort with those from different cultures and backgrounds.
  - iii. Enhance the respect people show for others who are different.
  - iv. Increase members' effectiveness in working with people from different cultures and backgrounds.
  - v. Increase links to networks of people and groups from different cultures and backgrounds.
  - vi. Develop and enforce policies that assure everyone's safety and rights regardless of cultural aspect or background.
- b. For each stated goal at the individual level (e.g., individual members of the group), identify specific activities that will be done to achieve success. These may include:



- i. Putting yourself and others in situations where you will meet people from other cultures and backgrounds.
  - ii. Examining your biases about people from other cultures (e.g., listing stereotypes and opinions you have of groups and the origins of those biases).
  - iii. Asking people questions about their cultures, customs and views, and comparing them to your own.
  - iv. Reading about other people's cultures and histories.
  - v. Listening to people tell their stories to better appreciate their experiences.
  - vi. Noting differences in what people value and do, in order to better understand how practices different from your own can be as or more effective in certain situations.
  - vii. Helping teach and encourage others to experience and appreciate different ways of seeing doing things.
- c. For each stated goal at the organizational level (e.g., overall organization), identify specific activities that will be done to achieve success. Activities may include:
- i. Including expectations for cultural competence in job descriptions.
  - ii. Ensuring your organizational facility is accessible and respectful of difference in its physical appearance, lay-out, decorations, and location.
  - iii. Engaging local people and other experts to teach and model cultural competence.
  - iv. Working together with people of other cultures in your community to reach common goals.
  - v. Actively eliminating prejudice and discrimination in policies and practices
  - vi. Adapting policies and practices within the organization to assure safety, equal rights, and respect for all regardless of culture or backgrounds.
- d. For each stated goal at the program level, identify specific activities that will be done to achieve success. Activities may include:
- i. Reviewing how the organization's programs, policies, and practices incorporate and accommodate local values and customs.
  - ii. Modifying current programs or interventions to better reflect the local customs and values of those affected by the organization's actions.
  - iii. Redesigning proposed activities with the assistance of people from multiple cultures in order to assure their relevance and increase their effectiveness.
- e. For each activity aimed at reaching goals at the organizational and program level, indicate:
- i. Who will complete the activity
  - ii. What will they do
  - iii. By when
  - iv. With what resources
  - v. In communication with whom

- f. Review your organization's progress in meeting your goals for becoming culturally competent. Evaluate the organization's level of cultural competence and make needed adjustments.

*Are you satisfied with the organization's progress? What adjustments might improve your success?*

#### 4. Build a Culturally Inclusive Community

- a. Imagine a culturally inclusive community. Depending on your situation, success might look like:
  - i. All citizens are engaged in decision that affect their lives.
  - ii. People take a stand when groups are targeted with unjust treatment.
  - iii. Public policies correct inequalities in the system (e.g., unequal educational opportunities).
  - iv. There are bridges and social ties among people from different cultures, backgrounds, and communities.

*What would success look like for cultural inclusiveness in your community?*

- b. Assess the cultural inclusiveness of the community as a whole, if you have not already done so in your cultural audit.
  - i. What cultural groups exist in the community?
  - ii. How do these groups function? Consider the interaction of their leaders, their social structure, where they live, what languages they speak, their cultural "rules", their methods of decision-making, and their social, political, and religious gathering places
  - iii. How are particular groups seen by the rest of the community?
  - iv. Is there, or has there ever been, discrimination?
  - v. What's the community's history, including the history of different cultural groups in the community, their relationship with greater community, and their history with each other?
- c. Invite opinion leaders and others from all groups to join in creating a vision of inclusiveness for the whole community
  - i. Purposely seek out and invite representatives of many cultural groups to join your efforts to create an inclusive community.
  - ii. Many people from different cultural groups should be involved from the very beginning in order to promote equal partnership and ownership in the process.
  - iii. Once the group has formed, choose leaders and methods of functioning that build consensus among the members.

*Who should be at the table or represented?*

- d. Identify a substantive issue from which to build inclusiveness
- i. What is the most important issue in your community that affects people of all cultural backgrounds?
  - ii. Identify a common issue that can help bring people of different cultures together to work towards a common purpose

*What substantive issues may help bring people from different cultural groups together in your community?*

- e. Develop a strategic plan for using that issue to build inclusiveness within a participatory process
- i. Describe long-range goals related to the creation of an inclusive community (e.g., engage all citizens in decision making).
  - ii. Describe short-range goals (e.g., development of intergroup relationships, addressing shared issues).
  - iii. Describe how you will assess or evaluate progress reaching those goals.
- f. Encourage group members to establish relationships outside the group. Indicate how you will do so including by:

- i. Arranging for culturally diverse groups of people to carry out specific projects together.
- ii. Regular discussions of common ground and similar concerns at public meetings.
- iii. Participation in events and celebrations of different cultures.
- iv. Rotating groups meetings among communities of the cultures represented in the broader community.
- v. Establishing regular social occasions outside the group.
- vi. Actively create a welcoming atmosphere for those outside the group.

*Describe ways your organization might encourage individual relationships among members.*

- g. Identify the assets that each cultural group brings to the table, and use those assets in strategic planning. For example:
- Skills related to visual arts, music, craftsmanship.
  - Experience in political action.
  - Expertise in conflict resolution.
  - Other assets.

