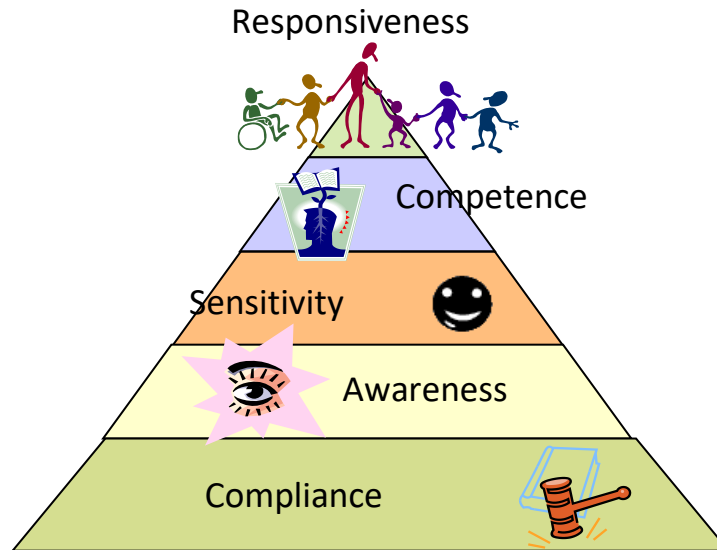# CEE Taxonomy of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning

RESPONSIVENESS (Proficiency)
I consistently apply knowledge and skills to significantly change day-to-day behavior within the context of diversity. This includes an openness to see beliefs in self and others that have evolved based on experience and a willingness to challenge those beliefs. I take action to modify both my behavior and the behavior of others.

COMPETENCE - (Knowledge & skills)
I fully understand issues of diversity, my beliefs, values, and assumptions and their impact on my behavior. I understand the relationship between pedagogy, student behavior and the ability to learn in the context of diversity. I do not consistently apply this knowledge to modify my behavior in my daily work.

SENSITIVITY
My awareness of diversity and willingness to meet the needs of others causes minor changes in my behavior, yet, I lack the knowledge to be fully aware of the impact of my beliefs, expectations, and assumptions on my behavior.

AWARENESS
I am aware of differences, yet do not have the knowledge to understand why I would want to change my behavior.

COMPLIANCE
I follow what the law requires—Federal, State, and District Policy

Cultural Responsiveness in Action- Through the Lens of the Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools

CEE Note: The following was created by Dorothy Woods as part of the consulting and coaching collaborative known as EdAdvocates, Inc. While EdAdvocates no longer exists, this material is used with the permission and appreciation of Dorothy Woods.

With increased levels of cultural competency, cultural awareness, and sensitivity to the multi-dimensional learning needs of students, we will begin to see improvements in the academic achievement of ALL children ensuring that their educational experience is fair and free of bias.

(Bias & Fairness Review Panel: Reading and Mathematics)

Research studies have provided increasing evidence that "learning begins with the learners' frame of reference so culture cannot be separated from schooling"

(Shannon & Bylsma)

The degree to which schools are able to become high-performing is determined by the presence of nine common characteristics, as determined from a synthesis of research performed by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). All of these characteristics are impacted by the degree to which cultural competence exists within the system.

(Thelma Jackson)

Many research studies and research literature have documented the characteristics of improving schools within the context of ethnic and cultural diversity. A number of common descriptors emerged from new and ongoing research studies and research literature reviews that shed light on how to view each of the Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools through educational equity and cultural competency (culturally responsiveness) lens.

The *italized* descriptors following each of the nine characteristics summaries suggest educational equity implications for that particular characteristic. The parts of the summaries that are in italics were generated by Seattle Public Schools' Cultural Competency: Adult Literacy Task Force (2005). The Task Force adapted the Nine Characteristics of High Performing Schools document published by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to reflect a culturally responsive lens to the nine characteristics. Research studies and research literature suggest that these and other descriptors are indicators of powerful teaching and learning that benefits all children. These descriptors provide information that can have a positive impact on increased academic achievement for all children, on learning and teaching, school policies, practices, procedures, collaboration and communication, and on parent/family support and involvement. The descriptors could be viewed as guiding questions for reflection, focus and action that could be used as a starting point to equitable opportunity and access for all children.

Clear and Shared Focus

Does everyone knows where they are going and why? The focus is on achieving a shared vision, and all understanding their role in achieving the vision. The focus and vision are developed from common beliefs and values, creating a consistent direction for all involved. ***The focus is on achieving a shared vision grounded in equity, and all understanding their role in achieving the vision.***

Lens of Cultural Responsiveness

- *School vision, mission, core values and guiding principles statements reflect a commitment to equity and excellence for all learners.*
- *There is a common commitment to create a culturally responsive, high achieving learning environment.*
- *Beliefs, attitudes and practices embrace cultural competency.*
- *School improvement plans delineate specific strategies that provide equitable learning opportunity and access for all students.*
- *There is a shared belief that every student's achievement is the most important priority.*
- *There is a high sense of efficacy in teaching students of color and linguistic backgrounds.*
- *The fair and equitable treatment of every student is the school norm.*
- *Staff believes in and adheres to the "no excuse" policy that there is no good reason to give up on a learner.*

At the heart of a school are its visions of achievement: what students should know and be able to do and why, and equity: what it looks like when each student is supported and challenged to achieve successfully. Goals and standards for performance express this vision and apply to every student.

(Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools)

We will develop the individual and organizational knowledge, attitudes, skills, and practices to create culturally responsive learning environments that expect and support high academic achievement for learning from all racial groups.

(John Hopkins School District 270)

High Standards and Expectations

Teachers and staff believe that all students can learn and meet high standards. While recognizing that some students must overcome significant barriers, these obstacles are not seen as insurmountable. All students are offered an ambitious and rigorous course of study.

Lens of Cultural Responsiveness

- *Every student is known, supported and expected to achieve standards.*
- *All staff examines their practices to ensure fair and equitable treatment to all students.*
- *High expectations are continually communicated to students through encouragement and support, as well as holding students accountable for their learning and behavior.*
- *Staff ensures that high-expectations for students of color and linguistic backgrounds become a school norm and become a core value for all staff.*
- *Staff sends verbal and nonverbal messages that indicate all students and in particular students of color and linguistic backgrounds are capable of achieving success.*
- *Staff expects and ensures that all students have equitable opportunities to learn and meet high standards.*
- *Staff has high expectations for themselves and others.*
- *Staff holds themselves and others accountable for the achievement of all students.*
- *There is a school culture that expects and supports high academic achievement for every student.*

Blessed Are Those Who Expect Nothing…For They Shall Not Be Disappointed.

(Anonymous)

All students should receive the consistent message that they are expected to attain high standards in their school work. This message must be delivered by all that are involved in students' academic lives.

(Teaching Diverse Learners)

Effective School Leadership

Effective instructional and administrative leadership is required to implement change processes. Effective teachers are proactive and seek help that is needed. They also nurture an instructional program and school culture conducive to learning and professional growth. Effective leaders can have different styles and roles- teachers and other staff, including those in the district office, often has a leadership role. ***Effective leaders are proactive in ensuring that cultural competency is infused throughout classrooms and building practices. They nurture a culturally responsive instructional program and promote a school community conducive to learning and professional growth.***

Lens of Cultural Responsiveness

Administrative Leaders

- *Assess the current level of cultural competence and provide leadership and direction in mobilizing resources to support staff acquisition of becoming culturally proficient.*
- *Identify and disseminate to staff the promising practices for language minority students.*
- *Understand what is meant by culturally competent and that cultural competence is a process on a continuum.*
- *Act on the imperative of developing cultural competence for self and staff.*
- *Develop their capacity for cultural self-assessment.*
- *Promote the understanding that there is diversity within and between cultures.*
- *Ensure institutionalization of cultural knowledge – integrated into school programs, policies, practices, curriculum, instruction and assessment school systems.*
- *Include culturally competency requirements in staff job descriptions for potential employees and discuss the importance of cultural awareness and competency with staff.*

Teacher Leaders

- *Take the lead in articulating an equity vision to colleagues.*
- *Lead equity focused action research initiatives.*
- *Assist in designing and implementing a plan for developing cultural competency in staff and students.*
- *Ensure classroom practices reflect and support the development of cultural understanding within the school.*

Student Leaders

- *Show a personal interest in and independently seek ways to broaden their understanding of cultural diversity and use what they learn to increase their sensitivity of others.*
- *Demonstrate culturally diverse knowledge, attitudes, and skills in their learning/daily lives.*

School administrators recognize the diversity within the community and understand the complex characteristics of ethnic, racial, and cultural groups.

(Washington Association of School Administrators)

High Levels of Collaboration and Communication

There is strong teamwork among teachers across all grades and with other staff. Everybody is involved and connected to each other, including parents and members of the community, to identify problems and work on solutions. ***There is a commitment to teamwork among teachers and staff throughout the learning community. This commitment includes ongoing communication with families and members of the community to improve student achievement. Authentic collaboration requires varied communication styles and strategies to meet the diverse needs of students, staff and families.***

Lens of Cultural Responsiveness

- *Staff embraces the norm of collaboration and of creating a culturally responsive learning community with colleagues, parents and community - a professional learning community concept.*
- *Staff research and collaborate to implement culturally responsive effective teaching practices to connect curriculum to learners' experiences and frames of reference*
- *There is staff consensus of the importance of collaboration for teacher efficacy and student achievement.*
- *Administrators state expectations explicitly for cooperation among teachers.*

Collaborative schools have more satisfying and more productive work environments.

(Fullan and Hargreaves)

In collaborative school cultures, the underlying norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions reinforce and support high levels of collegiality, team work, and dialogue about problems of practice. In short, collaboration can affect the quality of teaching.

(Kent Peterson)

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Aligned with Standards

The planned and actual curriculum taught is aligned with the essential academic learning requirements (EALRs) *and is culturally relevant*. Research-based teaching *and culturally responsive* teaching strategies and *relevant* materials are used. *Daily instruction is guided by data from classroom and state assessments*. Staff understands the role of classroom and state assessments, what the assessments measure, and how student work is evaluated.

Lens of Cultural Responsiveness

- *Instruction and learning reflects multicultural viewpoints.*
- *Instructional strategies are culturally connected.*
- *Instruction incorporates and integrates the students' diverse ways of knowing and understanding – culturally connected instructional strategies.*
- *Instructional learning activities and the learning environment relate to and reflect students' backgrounds and students' social, cultural, and linguistic experiences.*
- *Use of knowledge of all students and their cultures is used to plan instruction.*
- *Curriculum is aligned to standards and is integrated, interdisciplinary, meaningful, and student-centered. The curriculum has rigor and challenges students to develop higher-order knowledge and skills.*
- *There is a fundamental shift from a euro-centric to a culturally inclusive curriculum and pedagogy.*
- *Instruction focuses on teaching the processes of thinking, understanding and applying skills to all students, not relegating low-achieving students to highly structured class work focused on low-level intellectual activity and lower-level content.*
- *Teaching strategies vary to address diverse learning styles, using cooperative groups, independent work, role-playing, and options for assignment completion; and allowing students to select reading materials and projects.*
- *Classroom and individual student achievement data aligned with the standards guide instructional decisions.*
- *Students have opportunities to research their culture and the cultures of others.*
- *Performance assessments matches student learning and matches instruction.*

To maximize learning opportunities, teachers should gain knowledge of the cultures represented in their classroom and adapt lessons to reflect ways of communicating and learning that are familiar to students.

(Teaching Diverse Learners)

Frequent Monitoring of Teaching and Learning

A steady cycle of different assessments identify a student who needs help. More support and instruction time is provided, either during the school day or outside normal school hours, to students who need more help. Teaching is adjusted based on frequent monitoring of student progress and needs. Assessment results are used to focus and improve instructional programs. ***In addition to mandated assessments, culturally relevant assessment tools and their results are used to focus and improve instructional programs.***

Lens of Cultural Responsiveness

- *Teaching staff develop their skills to understand how to best use multiple types of academic achievement data and perception data to inform decisions about academic achievement, student behavior, school programs, practices, instruction, curriculum, and climate.*
- *Teachers inform students about their academic and behavioral progress, as well as steps to remediate learning and behavioral needs.*
- *There are accountability processes and measures for setting and reporting progress on strategies for cultural competence staff development.*
- *Achievement data are disaggregated by race, gender, and poverty indicators for analysis, interpretation, and used to guide educational decision making.*
- *Classroom assessments and rubrics are free of cultural bias and these assessments do not penalize students with varying levels of proficiency.*
- *Student learning progress is monitored frequently. Provisions are made for monitoring the feedback and adapting instruction as appropriate to meet student learning and behavioral needs.*

Accurate and complete data are essential for improving teaching and learning. Data must be analyzed and made available in useful formats so they have meaning in everyday context of classroom and lesson design.

(Shannon & Bylsma)

Focused Professional Development

A strong emphasis is placed on training staff in areas of most need **with specific emphasis placed on infusing cultural competency throughout the instructional program.** Feedback from learning and teaching focuses extensive and ongoing professional development. The support is also aligned with the school or district vision and objectives.

Lens of Cultural Responsiveness

- *Staff becomes familiar with current research findings and effective practices for educating culturally diverse students, as well as students from other linguistic backgrounds.*
- *Professional development focuses on culturally relevant educational practices, enabling staff to work effectively with a diverse student population in an unbiased, nurturing and respectful manner.*
- *Professional development should cause educators to ask probing questions about classroom practices, school climate, and building/district policies that hinder student achievement.*
- *Participation in differentiated staff development experiences strengthens knowledge, attitudes, skills and practices to create culturally responsive learning environments.*

Professional development builds cultural competence, examines beliefs, and challenges institutional barriers that act as obstacles to equity for all students.

(Researched-based Practices in Professional Development,

Washington State Superintendent of Public Instruction)

Supportive Learning Environment

The school has a safe, ***culturally inclusive***, civil, healthy, and intellectually stimulating learning environment. ***All*** students feel respected and connected with the staff ***and are engaged in learning with staff in authentic, rigorous learning experiences in ways that honor cultural diversity***. Instruction is personalized and small learning environments increase and enhance the positive student ***(and staff relationships)*** contact with teachers.

Lens of Cultural Responsiveness

- *Students feel that staff caring extends beyond the classroom.*
- *There is a safe, caring, nurturing learning environment free from stereotypes, teasing, bullying and harassment.*
- *School students and staff show respect for students' first language and dialects.*
- *There is varied support to help every student succeed including listening carefully to students' voice on their learning and what helps them succeed.*
- *There is a positive interpersonal relationship between staff and students, and among students.*
- *The school schedule provides greater opportunities for students to learn by offering extended academic time.*
- *School structures include student groupings and teacher assignments that personalize the educational setting.*

Research has shown that when students' cultures are understood and appreciated…the students do better in school.

(Peggy McIntosh)

High Level of Parent and Community Involvement

Everyone in the community has the responsibility to partner in the education of our students. There is a sense that all have a responsibility to educate students, not just the teachers and staff in schools. **We value the families,** parents, businesses, social service agencies, and community colleges/universities who play a vital, **significant and active** role in this effort.

Lens of Cultural Responsiveness

- *Staff draws upon students' cultural knowledge and community where possible and appropriate.*
- *Communication strategies with parents/community reflect awareness and sensitivity to the characteristics and varying needs of the school community (e.g. work schedules, language of the home, and culture of the family).*
- *The school engages the community to take an active role in the education of students by participating in a range of learning activities and programs outside of the school.*
- *The school redefines parent/family involvement to reflect cultural perspectives, norms, and expectations.*
- *Schools explore how practices to engage families of color and linguistic backgrounds can enhance reform measures to improve achievement.*
- *Parents/families and school community feel that their involvement is encouraged and viewed as essential.*
- *There is a strong connection between school and families.*
- *The school has a family-school partnership policy.*
- *Schools view parent/family involvement in nontraditional ways and invite parent/family participation in ways that value, empower, and promote cross-cultural communication.*

Teachers have the greatest impact on students' academic achievement. What teachers do with students and in partnership with students' family and care givers is the blood that keeps the heart of the school pumping.
(Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools)

Schools cannot educate young people well without the partnership with parents, community members who care about education. These partnerships create strong relationships that support student learning.

(Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools)

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