Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning for Each Student

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Teachers are some of my favorite people in the world. I mean I really love teachers! They tend to be enthusiastic about changing society, and more often than not, they care so deeply about their work and their students. What’s not to like? As a former teacher myself, I feel so very fortunate to meet teachers from all over the United States in my work. Despite all of the BS that teachers have to deal with in our political climate, they remain optimistic about the state of education, which honestly blows my mind. It is from this place of love that I work with teachers to help them improve their practice. And with the realities of the “education debt” and considering that 80% of our teachers are White while nearly half (and growing) of our students are youth of Color, part of improving teaching practice means paying more critical attention to race in our schools. Though I know there are actively racist teachers out there, most White teachers mean well and have no intention of being racist. Yet as people who are inscribed with Whiteness, it is possible for us to act in racist ways no matter our intentions. Uprooting racism from our daily actions takes a lifetime of work.

Thus, as we head into the first weeks of school all over the US, here are 10 ways that White teachers introduce racism into our schools paired with things we can do instead.

1. Lowering or Raising Achievement Expectations Based on Race/Ethnicity

It’s probably best to start with one of the more common and obvious ways that racism can enter teaching practice: our expectations of student ability and achievement. Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are constantly inundated with racist messaging about what students can and can’t achieve. Whether we see media narratives about the math prodigy Asian students or the “ghetto” Black students who are reading 5 grade levels behind, we end up getting pretty clear messages long before we start teaching about what our student can handle. In my own teaching, I know that I had a hard time actually teaching my students within their ZPDs because I was told from before I even started teaching that they simply weren’t capable of writing complex papers about world events. But they could! All it took was coordinated effort from multiple teachers pushing them as hard as we could! We know that the expectations students are held to often correlate less to their ability than their race and class, so what should we do about it?

What to Do Instead

First, we need to spend some serious time reflecting about our own internalized biases. We all have them (not sure about yours? Consider taking this test!). And if we are working to understand our biases, then we can begin to mitigate their effects. Second, we need to be sure that we are using effective, non-culturally-biased measures to determine student ability and to push them to their zones of proximal development. By making sure we are basing the ways we push our students in data drawn from legitimate (if limiting) measures, we can hopefully use that data to check some of our own biases.

2. Being ‘Race Neutral’ Rather than Culturally Responsive

In my work with teachers, I sometimes meet teachers who claim that they “don’t see Color,” both in naive attempts to be “progressive” but also in an ill-advised attempt to avoid tracking students based on race/ethnicity. But our students don’t need a “race neutral” approach to their education. There is endless research about how students of all races need a culturally responsive education; it’s just that White students who have White teachers are far more likely to receive one. Culturally responsive teaching is not just a box that we can check with simple changes to curriculum. Instead, it is a pedagogical shift that all teachers must work to cultivate over the course of a career, one that works its way into every aspect of how we teach. Part of culturally responsive teaching also demands that we not simply focus on the races of our students but, instead, turn the lens on our own racial identity. Race neutrality lends itself to defensiveness to the ways Whiteness and racism are problematic in our teaching. Cultural responsiveness demands that we do the difficult work of exploring a different way of being White, one where we see our liberation as bound up with that of our students and their families.

What to Do Instead
Start by reading the amazing literature on culturally responsive teaching, looking to Geneva Gay, Beverly Daniel Tatum, and Gary Howard for starters. And get creative! One of the most amazing things I see in teachers is the wonderful imagination that so many use to reach students. **Apply that creativity to a race-conscious classroom, and we could see some powerful (and innovative) results.** Then share! Blog about them or publish them in educational publications (while being open to critical feedback) so that we can all learn together.

3. Using Racially Coded Language

With how common racially coded language in the US, there are surely words that enter our common vocab that can do damage to our efforts to build racially just schools. Whether we’re referring to our students as “ghetto” or to their parents as “tiger moms” or saying “if only the parents cared about their kid’s education,” there are many overt ways that we can introduce racially coded language that devalues and/or otherizes our students and their families. **Perhaps even more common (particularly for White teachers in poorer, often urban areas) is treating our students as inspiration or poverty porn when talking to other White people.** This is one I know I have done many times. There is no need for me to include details about the harrowing life experiences of my students when talking to friends, yet I do so anyway to express just how “tough” things are for “those kids.” While we may be able to argue that this is to help our White peers empathize, rarely is this done in any sort of humanizing way. Rather, we are usually just trying to prove our credentials as a teacher who taught in the “inner city” or “the barrio.”

**What to Do Instead** - We as educators know the power of language, so we must be extra careful and precise with ours. We need to be hyper vigilant about how we talk about our students and their families/communities. When we do the work to build relationships and to partner in the areas where we teach, then we see our students and their families as fully-realized human beings, and as a result, we can talk about our students in more humanizing ways. Thus, we have a responsibility to do more than to just connect with our students. We have a responsibility to act in solidarity toward collective liberation!

4. Intentionally or Unintentionally Mispronouncing Names

One of the more subtle but powerful ways that White teachers inject racism into our schools is in how we engage with names that are different than those we grew up knowing. **Sometimes it shows up in simply not taking the time to learn how to properly pronounce a student’s name – but other times, it’s active resistance.** I can’t tell you how many times I have heard of teachers saying, “Their names are just too hard for me to pronounce,” so they settle for assigning nicknames. What we communicate with this microaggression is that the student’s identity ought to conform to the world we know, not that we ought to be responsive to the student.

**What to Do Instead**

Take the time to learn names. Apologize when you get names wrong, and work really hard to learn names the right way. Sometimes students who are used to White teachers mispronouncing their name will settle for you doing it “good enough.” Stress that you don’t want “good enough.” You want to call them by the name they want to be called!

5. Enforcing Harsh Discipline Practices That Disproportionately Impact Students of Color

In virtually every school in the country, from the most mono-racial to the most diverse, discipline practices are set up to fail students of Color, both in design and implementation, and there are dire consequences for students who “struggle with discipline problems” in our world of hyper-criminalization. Ta-Nehisi Coates demonstrated well in a recent interview how a lack of cultural awareness on the part of White teachers can lead to serious consequences for Black students who grow up in violent neighborhoods. Describing an incident where he was suspended for threatening a teacher who yelled at him in class, he noted how when “you don’t have anything else to lean on” except the basic respect of others, it means something wholly different than for students from a wholly different cultural context to have a teacher scream in their face.

**What to Do Instead**
In our own classrooms, we have to be willing to carefully investigate how we dole out discipline and work to change our practices. Do our management procedures reward students whose cultural backgrounds and expressions of, say, showing excitement reflect our own while punishing those who express these things differently? Perhaps more importantly, though, this is a problem that must be addressed in community. If you are great about mitigating racial bias in your management but your school has a zero-tolerance discipline system that sees kids leaving in handcuffs for acting out in school, then we must organize together as educators. It’s time to get cops out of our schools and to demand discipline policies that are based on principles of nonviolence and restorative justice.

6. (Inadvertently) Valuing Whiteness

One of the more insidious ways that White teachers bring racism into schools is in how we (often inadvertently) value Whiteness and European ways of being above all others. Whether we are strictly teaching the “canon” that is almost exclusively White or using examples in math or science problems that are more accessible to White and/or wealthy students than others, White teachers inject Whiteness into our classrooms all the time. In my own teaching, I found that I was calling my lightest-skinned students (in an almost all-Black classroom) by name when I couldn’t remember the names as readily of darker-skinned students. That’s valuing Whiteness.

What to Do Instead

We need to do obvious things like diversifying our curriculum and our materials, but beyond that, we must look inside for the more insidious ways that we value Whiteness. By questioning all aspects of how we teach to consider whether we are devaluing some people and valuing others, we are taking important steps toward racially just pedagogy.

7. Tokenizing Students’ Cultures to Connect with Them

The other side of the coin that comes with diversifying our curriculum and materials is that it can be done in a tremendously tokenizing way. If we don’t get to know our students first, then we might assume that our Dominican students and our students from northeastern Mexico all are the same and that they all could relate to a book about the migrant farm struggle in the southwestern US. Thus, we have to be careful not to tokenize students’ identities in our efforts to connect with them.

What to Do Instead

It’s a lot more work, but we ought to consider waiting to decide on the books we teach or the curricular examples until we’ve had some time to listen to our students and their families. Ask questions about what they want to learn about, and listen and respond accordingly! Unfortunately that means that we can’t just teach the same exact ways every year, but there are all sorts of resources to help!

8. Culturally Appropriate in an Effort to Connect with Students

For many of us White teachers who grew up with little-to-know exposure to people and cultures of Color and who don’t have a connection to our own ethnic cultural identities outside of Whiteness (notably, a lack of cultural identity), it can be hard to know how to connect with students. Unfortunately, this often means appropriating other cultures, particularly those of our students, to try to connect with them. A friend, mentor, and my co-author in an upcoming piece about White teachers who wish to develop anti-racist ways of being, Shelly Tochluk, cites a time when she wore a lappa (African skirt), an ankh around her neck, and carried a djembe to class in a misguided effort to connect. Reflecting on the experience, Shelly notes that it would have been far better to “include more African American voices into the curriculum.” If you’re not sure exactly why this is a problem, perhaps look here and here. Otherwise...

What to Do Instead

Invest in understanding your own ethnic, religious, and cultural heritage (particularly that from before your people became White) through an anti-racist lens. Then work hard to create space for authentic and accountable cultural exchange in your classroom!
9. Devaluing What Non-Teachers Contribute to the School Community

Everyone is trying to tell teachers how to do their job, and teachers are sick of hearing it from non-teachers. But from some White teachers, I hear the “if you haven’t taught, don’t tell me how to do my job” mantra used as a blanket for everyone from Bill Gates to the parents and community advocates where they teach. When we decide that teachers are the gatekeepers to what works in education and when the vast majority of teachers are White, we end up devaluing the insights and knowledge that many people of Color offer.

What to Do Instead

From parents to community leaders to other non-White staff in your building, there's a lot we can learn if we are willing to humbly listen to people of Color and implement what we learn about race in education. Actively seek to build relationships across difference and seek input in your classroom. Hell, invite folks into your classroom to observe and share and teach!

10. Doing Little or Nothing to Advocate for More Teachers and Staff of Color

Finally, and probably most importantly, there’s simply no substitute to teachers of Color teaching students who share their race (see here, here, here, and here). Unfortunately, many progressive White teachers note that it would be great to have more teachers of Color, but at the end of the day, what are we doing about it? What to Do Instead Organize! It’s what teachers do so well! Pressure our unions to make hiring teachers of Color the top priority. Advocate for alternative licensing options for paraprofessionals and teaching aides (who are disproportionately people of Color, especially in cities). Get on hiring committees at your school and ask hard questions about what we consider “qualified candidates.” This is somewhere that well-meaning White teachers can have a profound impact if we’re willing to invest our energy.

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Regardless of what it looks like, we need more White teachers who are willing to do the hard work of combatting the subtle racism we bring into our schools while working vociferously to change our own pedagogies and make our schools more racially just places! If not now, when? If not us, who?

To access hyperlinks, search “10 Way Well-Meaning White Teachers Bring Racism Into Our Schools”.
The following is adapted from a guide developed by the Office of University Relations, University of Wisconsin-Madison. Used with permission.

People are increasingly aware of the need to use language that recognizes our diversity and does not offend, demean, or exclude people on the basis of gender, race, ethnic group, religion, age, ability/disability, or sexual orientation.

Changing our language usage, however, does not come easily or automatically. Familiar ways of writing and speaking are more comfortable; substitute phrases do not always spring quickly to mind.

This guide is meant to help you find a more encompassing word or phrase when you need it and to be more attuned to language that, whether intended or not, may offend others. The guide aims primarily at written material but applies as well to the spoken word.

This area is controversial and in flux. Usage that groups prefer today may change next year. The point is to try to communicate in a way that is respectful of diversity. Also, the examples we cite may not satisfy everyone. For those who want more specific information or other alternatives, we have included a bibliography.

**Gender**

1. Include all people in general references by substituting gender-neutral words and phrases for gender-biased words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mankind</td>
<td>people, humanity, human beings, humankind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man-to-man defense</td>
<td>one-on-one defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man the operation</td>
<td>staff the operation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manpower</td>
<td>labor, human resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>layman’s terms</td>
<td>ordinary terms, lay terms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man hours</td>
<td>staff hours, hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manmade</td>
<td>manufactured, synthetic, artificial</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Communicate to everyone by including both male and female reference points. (Don't presume marital or familial relationships.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff and wives</td>
<td>Staff and guests, staff and spouses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You and your spouse are invited...</td>
<td>You and your guest are invited...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriends/girlfriends</td>
<td>Friends, guests, partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dear Sir</td>
<td>Dear Sir or Madam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dear Madam or Sir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dear Colleague</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dear Personnel Office</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Avoid gender-biased pronouns by:

   a) Dropping pronouns that signify gender and restructuring the statement.

   **Example**
   - Each student should hand in his term paper by...

   **Recommended**
   - Each student should hand in a term paper by...

   b) Changing to plural construction.

   **Example**
   - Each student should hand in his term paper by...
   - A nurse cares for her patients...

   **Recommended**
   - Students should hand in term papers by...
   - Nurses care for their patients...

   c) Replacing masculine or feminine pronouns with "one" or "you."

   **Example**
   - Each student should hand in his term paper by...

   **Recommended**
   - You should hand in your term paper by...

   d) Avoid awkward construction such as he (she), s/he, (s)he, or him/her. Such constructions, which can be easily reworked, imply that women are the subject only as an afterthought.

   **Example**
   - As a VIP, s/he is entitled to a reduced parking fee in Lot 60.
   - When welcoming a new staff member, ask him/her to provide a permanent address.

   **Recommended**
   - A VIP is entitled to a reduced parking fee in Lot 60.
   - When welcoming new staff, ask them to provide permanent addresses.

4. Use parallelism to refer to women and men equally and to make references consistent.

   **Example**
   - Micah Jordan, a strong athlete, and Suzy Garcia, an attractive young runner, are...
   - Ten men students and sixteen female students
   - Dr. Brown and Julia Smith were recently promoted.

   **Recommended**
   - Jordan, a strong basketball player, and Garcia, a powerful runner, are...
   - Ten male students and 16 female students
   - Dr. Brown and Dr. Smith or Mr. Brown and Ms. Smith

5. If a direct quote (derived from research or an interview) offends or inappropriately excludes women or men and is not essential to your document, consider eliminating, paraphrasing, or replacing the quote.
6. Use neutral words for "man" and "woman" in job titles or descriptions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>Chair, chairperson, director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policemen</td>
<td>Police officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salesgirl</td>
<td>Sales clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spokesman</td>
<td>Spokesperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady lawyer</td>
<td>Lawyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founding Fathers</td>
<td>Founders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Base communication on relevant qualities, not sexual stereotyping.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example</th>
<th>Recommended</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She's a good debater. She thinks like a man.</td>
<td>She's a good debater. She thinks well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A brilliant female researcher...</td>
<td>A brilliant researcher...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. When choosing photographs or illustrations, consider the balance of women and men. Also, be conscious of the relative positions of women and men and their actions. Nonverbal messages conveyed by portraying men standing/women sitting, men gesturing at smiling women, men pointing to or working with lab and other equipment while women passively observe imply status differences. Such implications, whether subtle or direct, are unrealistic in the modern workplace. Work with artists and photographers to update graphic content.

Age

1. Refer to a person's age only when it is relevant to the medium or the message. For example, communications that follow newspaper style are generally expected to state a subject's age. However, in most internal Laboratory communications age is not pertinent and its mention may even be distracting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Irrelevant</th>
<th>Relevant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The researchers, ages 56 and 60, won a grant from OERI.</td>
<td>Patricia Schmidt, 12, will study at UW-Madison this spring. She is the youngest student ever to enroll at the university.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. If you use a generic age description, ask your subjects what wording they prefer. Do they refer to themselves as older persons or senior citizens? As youths, teenagers, or young people?

3. Avoid clichés such as "precocious," "spry," or "chic," and avoid generalizations that reinforce stereotypes about age. Middle school children are not necessarily troublemakers, and not everyone over 80 lives in a nursing home.

4. Don't assume older people are less intellectually, physically, or emotionally able than other age groups. Also, don't underestimate the capabilities of younger people simply on the basis of their age.

Inappropriate

- Carl Elliot, 12, feeds his dog every day without having to be reminded.
- Darleen Hampton, 62, still puts in a full day in the admissions office.
5. Don’t use patronizing language.

Example
- The sweet little old lady beamed as she entered the classroom.

Recommended
- The older woman smiled as she entered the classroom.

6. In communications meant to represent a range of experiences or viewpoint, include people of diverse ages.

7. Newspaper style dictates that females 18 years or older are women, not girls; males 18 years or older are men, not boys.

Race and Ethnicity

1. Avoid identifying people by race or ethnic group unless it is relevant. We don’t usually point out that an individual is white or of Anglo-Saxon heritage. The same rule should apply to other groups.

   Inappropriate
   - Andrew Young, the black mayor of Atlanta, cast his vote.
   - Maria Duran, a Hispanic professor of physics, has been hired by the Laboratory.
   - Alpha Beta Gamma, the black fraternity, will present at the conference.

   Recommended
   - Andrew Young, the mayor of Atlanta, cast his vote.
   - Maria Duran, a professor of physics, has been hired by the Laboratory.
   - The Alpha Beta Gamma fraternity will present at the conference.

2. Avoid the term "nonwhite," which sets up white culture as the standard by which other cultures should be judged. When appropriate, use the alternative, “non-minority.”

   Also avoid “culturally disadvantaged” and “culturally deprived.” These terms imply that the dominant culture is superior to other cultures or that other groups lack a culture.

3. Refer to individuals as "member of a minority group" or specify the minority group (e.g., Latino) when minority group identity is pertinent. ("Minority" refers to a group and serves as a modifier in the term "minority group."

   Example
   - Women and minorities are encouraged to apply.
   - Minorities attended the meeting.

   Preferred
   - Women and members of minority groups are encouraged to apply.
   - Members of the Hmong and Korean communities attended the meeting.
4. Avoid words, images or situations that reinforce stereotypes and that imply all people of a particular race or ethnic group are the same.

**Example**
Not surprisingly, the Asian-American students did best in the math contest.

**The Problem**
Assuming it is relevant to point out that this group excelled, the phrase “not surprisingly” may reinforce the stereotype that all Asian Americans have superior aptitudes in math.

5. Be sure your communications do not patronize or give token attention to members of racial or ethnic groups. Exaggerated focus on people's accomplishments or insincere and gratuitous references to their concerns imply that they are not normally successful or accomplished, or are not considered part of mainstream society.

6. Stay attuned to the current terminology by which racial and ethnic groups refer to themselves. Usage changes (e.g., from "Black" to "African American"; from "Oriental" to "Asian American"). Also, consider using “European American” where appropriate.

National newspapers and television news are good indicators of current usage. Ask people what term they prefer.

People who trace their ancestry through the Caribbean or Central and South America may identify themselves as coming from any one of a number of different cultures and ethnic groups. For instance, the terms Hispanic, Latino/a, Chicano/a, and Puertorriqueno/a all have different meanings.

Many people whom the U.S. Census would describe as "Hispanic" prefer the term "Latino or Latina." Some people with Spanish-sounding surnames may have indigenous Indian, German, or Asian ancestry or prefer to be referred to by their nationality, e.g., Colombian, Nicaraguan, Guatemalan. Others may prefer that no reference be made to their nationality or ancestry.

People whose ancestors originally populated North America may want to be identified with specific communities, such as Winnebago or Chippewa, or they may prefer to be referred to as "American Indian" or "Native American" rather than "Indian." If in doubt, ask.

Also, attention must be paid to the punctuation used in referring to racial and ethnic groups. the terms "African American," "Asian American," etc., are nouns and should not be hyphenated. However, when these terms are used as modifiers (e.g., "the Asian-American students"), they should be hyphenated.

7. In the area of language proficiency, try to use terms that use positive descriptors, for example, "English language learner," or if more specificity is required, use "English as a second language student." Avoid use of the term "limited" or the prefix "non."

8. Be sensitive to religion when referring to various ethnic groups. Don’t make assumptions. For instance, just as not all Arabs are Muslims, most nations and ethnic groups embody different religious practices. Avoid stereotyping a race, nationality, or ethnic group with a specific religion.
9. Review written communications and visual materials to ensure that, where appropriate, all groups – women, men, minority and ethnic group members, older people, and disabled people – are represented. This does not mean that every publication, video or similar material must include all groups at all times, or that participation of particular groups should be exaggerated or overstated. But publications that are part of a continuing series, annual reports, and brochures and newsletters should aim for reasonable representation of all groups involved.

**Disabilities**

1. The terms “impairment,” “disability,” and “handicap” are not synonymous. Be sensitive to the meaning of each.

   - An **impairment** is a physiological condition.

     *Example:* Arthritis is an impairment in which tissues of the joints are damaged.

   - A **disability** is the consequence of an impairment. A disability may or may not be handicapping.

     *Example:* Disabilities resulting from arthritis include difficulty in bending the spine or limbs, and thus difficulty in walking or performing tasks.

   - A **handicap** is the social implication of a disability – a condition or barrier imposed by society, the environment or oneself. The term should not be used to describe a disability.

     *Example:* People with arthritic knees and hips may be handicapped by the absence of elevators in older buildings.

2. Disabilities may be the result of either injury or disease – often a disease long past. Disabled people should not automatically be viewed as sick or having a disease.

3. Put people first, not their disabilities.

   **Example**
   - The visually impaired student used a special keyboard.
   
   **Preferred**
   - The student, who is visually impaired, used a special keyboard.

4. Do not focus on a disability unless it is relevant to your communication.

   **Irrelevant**
   The new employee, whose bout with polio left him on crutches, will conduct a brown bag today on African history.

   **Relevant**
   The author of the text on legal rights for the disabled writes from experience. She has been a paraplegic since childhood.

5. In photos or illustrations, depict disabled people in everyday situations – work, home, play – and show
them interacting with nondisabled people. Do not focus on wheelchairs, crutches, or other adaptive equipment.

6. When the context calls for discussion of people with and without disabilities, use that term – “people without disabilities” – rather than “normal” or “abled-bodied.” (“Normal” implies that by comparison disabled people are abnormal; “able-bodied” suggests that all disabled people are physically disabled or unable to compensate for their disabilities.) “Nondisabled” is another useful term.

7. Avoid language that portrays people with disabilities as either unfortunate, helpless victims, or, at the other extreme, as courageous superhumans.

**Sexual Orientation**

1. “Gender orientation” and “sexual orientation” are preferred to “sexual preference,” a term which implies that being homosexual, bisexual or heterosexual is a matter of choice, and that sex is the focus of the relationship.

2. Most gay people prefer the term “gay” to the somewhat clinical “homosexual.” The term “gay” may be used to refer to both men and women, but “lesbian” is the term preferred by gay women. Keep in mind that people of a bisexual orientation may not consider themselves to be part of either the gay or heterosexual community. As a matter of principle, refer to societal groups in the way that members of each group prefer. Ask people what term they prefer.

3. Avoid using “gay lifestyle” or “lesbian lifestyle.” Being gay or lesbian is not a lifestyle; it is a fundamental orientation. In addition, gays’ lives and relationships are as diverse as those of the rest of the population.

4. “Gay community [is] an umbrella term used in the same manner that phrases such as ‘the Italian American community’ are used to describe groups with similar, but not identical backgrounds and social agendas. The term may be used to refer to both men and women, but, again, ‘lesbian and gay community’ is preferred.” (Media Guide to the Lesbian and Gay Community, 1990, p. 37)

5. Include the viewpoint of somebody who is gay when reporting on a gay topic. Better yet, solicit more than one gay viewpoint, since the gay, lesbian and bisexual community is not monolithic.

6. Avoid classroom or extracurricular activities or exercises that assume all students are heterosexual or that otherwise invade students’ privacy.

**References**


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

Deep Culture
Unspoken Rules
Partially below sea level
Emotional load: very high

Unconscious Rules
Completely below sea level
Emotional load: intense

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
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
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Equitable Classroom Practices</strong></th>
<th>D</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teacher welcomes students by name as they enter the classroom</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asks students correct pronunciation of their names</td>
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<tr>
<td>Correctly pronounces students names</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Teacher uses eye contact with both high- and low-achieving students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Makes culturally appropriate eye contact with all students</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Teacher uses proximity with high- and low-achieving students equitably</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circulates around student work areas to be close to all students</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Teacher uses body language, gestures, and expressions to convey a message that all students’ questions and opinions are important</td>
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<tr>
<td>Smiles</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nods in affirmation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leans toward the student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Turns toward students who are speaking to express interest</td>
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<td>5. Teacher arranges the classroom to accommodate discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arranges seating to facilitate student-to-student discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arranges seating to facilitate teacher-to-student discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Teacher ensures that boards, displays, instructional materials, and other visuals used in the classroom reflect the racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of the students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Displays and uses materials that reflect all students’ racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, and does this throughout the school year rather than only for special occasions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Displays supplementary books that reflect students’ racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds, and does this throughout the school year rather than only for special occasions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Displays products and props from students homes and community backgrounds</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Teacher uses a variety of visual aids and props to support student learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses multicultural photos, pictures, and props to illustrate concepts and content</td>
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<td>Uses appropriate technology to illustrate concepts and content</td>
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<td>8. Teacher learns, uses, and displays some words in the students’ heritage language(s)</td>
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<td>Posts some content words or phrases in students’ heritage language(s)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses some words or phrases from students’ heritage language(s) in the classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Teacher models the use of a graphic organizer</td>
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<td>Uses a variety of graphic organizers during instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourages students to identify and use the task-appropriate graphic organizer by modeling</td>
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Adapted from: A Resource for Equitable Classroom Practices, 2010 | Equity Initiatives Unit – Office of Human Resources and Development | Montgomery County Public Schools, Maryland
10. **Teacher uses class-building and team-building activities to promote peer support for academic achievement**
   Structures academic and social interactions between students

11. **Teacher uses random response strategies**
   - Numbered heads
   - Color-coded cards
   - Equity sticks
   - Calling sticks
   - Calling cards

12. **Teacher uses cooperative learning structures**
   - Think-Pair-Share
   - Teammates consult
   - Jigsaw
   - Pairs check
   - Partner A and B
   - Boggle
   - Last word

13. **Teacher structures heterogeneous and cooperative groups for learning**
   - Uses random grouping methods to form small groups
   - Explicitly teaches collaborative learning skills to students
   - Provides opportunities for cooperative groups to process/reflect on how well they accomplished the task and maintained effective group listening

14. **Teacher uses probing and clarifying techniques to guide students who are struggling to answer questions**
   - Rephrases the question
   - Asks a related question
   - Gives the student a hint, clue, or prompt
   - Uses scaffolded questions

15. **Teacher acknowledges all students’ comments, responses, questions, and contributions**
   - Uses affirming, correcting, or probing techniques to acknowledge all students' responses

16. **Teacher seeks multiple responses**
   - Validates all perspectives (examples of responses include:
     - “That’s one idea, does anyone else have another?”
     - “That’s one way to solve the problem, who did it another way?”
     - “Who has an alternative view?”

17. **Teacher uses multiple approaches to consistently monitor students’ understanding of instruction, directions, procedures, processes, questions, and content**
   - Thumbs up
   - Unison response

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<table>
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<tr>
<td>One-question quiz</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>18. Teacher identifies students’ knowledge before instruction</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Word splash</td>
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<td>K-W-L</td>
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<td>Anticipation guide</td>
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<td>Brainstorming</td>
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<td>Webbing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>19. Teacher uses students’ real-life experiences to connect school learning to students’ lives</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asks students to reflect upon and discuss specific questions at the start and throughout a unit of study</td>
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<td>Uses examples that are reflective of students’ lives to support learning</td>
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<td><strong>20. Teacher uses wait time</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Silently waits at least 3–5 seconds for a student’s response after posing a question</td>
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<td>Silently pauses at least 3 seconds to consider the student’s response before affirming, correcting, or probing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pauses silently following a student’s response to allow other students to consider their reactions, responses, and extensions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structures silent thinking time before expecting students to respond</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>21. Teacher asks students for feedback on the effectiveness of his or her instruction</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asks students to indicate the learning activities that are effective in helping them to learn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses the plus/delta quality tool to discern what instructional practices help students learn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses interviews, surveys, and questionnaires to gather feedback from students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uses exit interviews to gather feedback about instruction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>22. Teacher provides students with the criteria and standards for successful task completion</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Evaluates student work by providing performance criteria (i.e., rubrics, exemplars, anchor papers)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develops rubrics in collaboration with students</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>23. Teacher gives students effective and specific oral and written feedback that prompts improved performance</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Confers with students to provide feedback to improve performance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides opportunities for students to use peer reviews</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provides written feedback that allows students to revise and improve their work</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>24. Teacher provides multiple opportunities to use effective feedback to review and resubmit work for evaluation against the standard</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Allows students to revise work based on teacher feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>Encourages and structures opportunities for students to provide feedback to peers based on an established standard</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th><strong>Teacher explains and models positive self-talk.</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explains to students the importance of positive self-talk</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shares personal examples of how positive self-talk leads to positive outcomes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Teacher asks higher order questions equitably of high- and low-achieving students</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Asks analysis question</td>
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<td>Asks synthesis question</td>
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<td>Asks evaluation question</td>
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<td>Poses higher-order questions or uses a random method for calling on students</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Provides think time for all students before asking for responses</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Teacher provides individual help to high- and low-performing students</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ensures all students receive individual help</td>
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Promoting Trauma-Informed School Systems That Provide Prevention and Early Intervention Strategies to Create Supportive and Nurturing School Environments

How Does Trauma Affect Children?
The effects of trauma on children are far more pervasive than adults imagine. The National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence found that over 60% of children surveyed experienced some form of trauma, crime, or abuse in the prior year, with some experiencing multiple traumas. Often, children and adolescents do not have the necessary coping skills to manage the impact of stressful or traumatic events. As such, as many as one in three students who experience a traumatic event might exhibit symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Following a child’s exposure to a traumatic event, parents and teachers are likely to observe the following symptoms:

- **Re-experiencing** — constantly thinking about the event, replaying it over in their minds, nightmares.
- **Avoidance** — consciously trying to avoid engagement, trying not to think about the event.
- **Negative Cognitions and Mood** — blaming others or self, diminished interest in pleasurable activities, inability to remember key aspects of the event.
- **Arousal** — being on edge, being on the lookout, constantly being worried.

**Traumatic Events and Learning**

Symptoms resulting from trauma can directly impact a student’s ability to learn. Students might be distracted by intrusive thoughts about the event that prevent them from paying attention in class, studying, or doing well on a test. Exposure to violence can lead to decreased IQ and reading ability. Some students might avoid going to school altogether.

Exposure to violence and other traumatic events can disrupt youths’ ability to relate to others and to successfully manage emotions. In the classroom setting, this can lead to poor behavior, which can result in reduced instructional time, suspensions, and expulsions. Long-term results of exposure to violence include lower grade point averages and reduced graduation rates, along with increased incidences of teen pregnancy, joblessness, and poverty.

**Student Behavior**

A school culture that values and welcomes students, staff, and family members is essential for a positive school climate and sets the tone for all behavior. Trauma-informed schools establish a positive climate through clearly-defined and effectively communicated discipline policies.

Student misconduct in the school and classroom is often related to stressful or traumatic events students experience in the surrounding neighborhood, in the community, or in the student’s home. Before taking disciplinary action, such as initiating a suspension, the principal or administrator should consider restorative school-based measures, resources, and interventions that address the needs of the student.

**Communicate Expectations**

School principals must ensure that school discipline policies and expectations for student behavior are clearly and consistently communicated to students, staff, and family members at the beginning.
of each school year and throughout. Information should be shared directly as well as through social media, paying special attention to newly-enrolled students and their caregivers.

It can be helpful to present school behavior expectations in a student handbook and to ask students and families to sign an agreement indicating that they have received the information. Trauma-exposed individuals benefit from clearly-defined expectations. The more schools can set these policy expectations at the front end, the more secure students, staff, and family members will feel.

Avoid Expulsion

The expulsion of a student is the most severe disciplinary action a school district can take in response to student misconduct. Expulsion results in prolonged removal of a student from the regular school program, increasing the risk of academic failure and leading to reduced graduation rates. Schools are often safer than the surrounding communities in which they are located, so suspension/expulsion often leads to poorly-supervised time in the community. This places students at increased risk of victimization and involvement in anti-social or criminal activities and behaviors.

Expulsion should be considered only when the school principal is mandated to recommend it, or when the misbehavior poses a serious safety risk to individuals on campus or during school-sponsored activities.

Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports

Many state-wide educational discipline policies strongly recommend using a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS), such as Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) or Positive Behavioral Supports (PBS), to set school-wide behavioral expectations and clearly defined alternatives to suspension. According to many state laws, schools must use alternatives to suspension to address problems of truancy, tardiness, and/or other attendance-related issues. Some districts have begun to look into mandating alternatives to suspension for willful defiance.

Secondary Traumatic Stress

Coping with the effects of others’ trauma can be draining and can have lasting negative effects. It is not uncommon for educators who deal with traumatized children to develop their own symptoms of traumatic stress. This is known as secondary traumatic stress.

In order to best serve their students and maintain their own health, educators must be alert to the signs of secondary traumatic stress in themselves and their coworkers. In a trauma-informed school, staff should be encouraged to practice self-care along with other strategies to guard against or heal from the effects of secondary traumatic stress.

Risk Factors & Causes of Secondary Traumatic Stress

Certain circumstances can cause you to be more susceptible to secondary traumatic stress. Seek support and practice self-care to manage the possible effects of these experiences:

- Personal exposure to a traumatic event(s) or to individuals who are coping with their own reactions to trauma
- Direct contact with children’s traumatic stories
- Helping others and neglecting yourself

Signs of Secondary Traumatic Stress

Retrieved 12 September 2014 from TSA | Support for Trauma-Informed Schools and Resources for Trauma
Secondary traumatic stress can impact all areas of your life. The effects can range from mild to debilitating. If you think you might be at risk, be alert for any of the following symptoms:

- **Emotional** — feeling numb or detached; feeling overwhelmed or maybe even hopeless.
- **Physical** — having low energy or feeling fatigued.
- **Behavioral** — changing your routine or engaging in self-destructive coping mechanisms.
- **Professional** — experiencing low performance of job tasks and responsibilities; feeling low job morale.
- **Cognitive** — experiencing confusion, diminished concentration, and difficulty with decision making; experiencing trauma imagery, which is seeing events over and over again.
- **Spiritual** — questioning the meaning of life or lacking self-satisfaction.
- **Interpersonal** — physically withdrawing or becoming emotionally unavailable to your coworkers or your family.

If you experience any of these symptoms, take steps to manage your secondary traumatic stress.

**Managing Secondary Traumatic Stress**

Awareness is the key to managing secondary traumatic stress for the organization and for individuals. A school community can share information about the signs of secondary traumatic stress so staff members recognize the signs in themselves and in others. Regular small group check-ins can be an outlet for feelings of frustration and stress. Acknowledgement of the stressful conditions by administration can help educators feel heard.

Individuals can protect against and manage secondary traumatic stress by practicing self-care through regular exercise, a healthy diet, and sufficient sleep. Activities such as yoga or meditation can be helpful in reducing general stress. It is important for staff to take time away from the stress-inducing situation. Spending time with family or friends, or focusing on a project or hobby can help.

Secondary traumatic stress goes beyond regular stress. A counselor can be a resource for strategies to cope with the symptoms and to heal.

**Bullying and Cyberbullying**

Bullying is repeated and intentional threats, physical assaults, and intimidation that occur when individuals or a group exert their real or perceived difference in power or strength on another.

Bullying commonly occurs in schools and can be in the shape of physical, verbal, social, or electronic aggression. The 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey reports that 20% of high school students reported being bullied; however, students of all ages experience bullying.

**Types of Bullying**

Bullying can take many forms:

- **Verbal bullying** — includes name-calling, threats of harm, and taunting.
- **Social bullying** — can involve excluding someone intentionally, encouraging others to socially exclude someone, spreading rumors, or publicly shaming someone.
- **Physical bullying** — often results in physically harming someone or their belongings by hitting, punching, pushing, spitting, kicking, or tripping.
• **Cyberbullying** — involves using electronic media such as on the Internet, texting, and social media to spread hurtful and damaging stories, rumors, and images. Although cyberbullying can take place anywhere and anytime, this form of bullying often can travel rapidly through a school population and beyond, devastating the victims and leaving them feeling powerless.

Students who are perceived as different by other students are more likely to be bullied. These more vulnerable students include LGBT youth, students with physical, learning, or mental health disabilities, and students who are targeted for differences in race, ethnicity, or religion.

Both students who bully and students who are bullied can suffer lasting psychological effects, including post-traumatic stress. It is vital that schools provide support to all of the students involved in a bullying incident and that schools take steps to reduce bullying.

FACT: 20% of high school students report being bullied. -- 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

**Prevent Bullying**

In a trauma-informed school, the best deterrent to bullying and cyberbullying is to create a culture of acceptance and communication. Such a culture empowers students to find positive ways to resolve conflicts and has an administration, teachers, and other staff who can support students in making constructive decisions and respond proactively when aggression of any kind exists on the school campus. These steps can help you get started:

- **Establish an anti-bullying policy** — Know your state and district policies and seek input from all members of your school community to determine how your school will implement rules of conduct, a way for students to report bullying, and the process by which the school will act to address reported bullying.

- **Put into action a school-wide plan** — Disseminate a bullying prevention plan that involves all adults on campus in knowing how to support positive behavior, address unacceptable actions, and refer students who need additional counseling.

- **Educate the school community** — Incorporate bullying prevention in lesson plans, teach students how to effectively respond to bullying, and provide resources for parents so they can be partners in your anti-bullying efforts.
Student Conversation Starters

- What is a favorite tradition in your family?
- What object in your home best describes your culture or your family?
- Name a family member or community member whom you admire, and explain why.
- Why do you have the name you have? What is the meaning of your name?
- What type of music do you like? What kinds of dance do you like?
- What kinds of art do you like?
- What types of books do you read?
- What do you like to do outside of school? What do you do when you get home from school?
- How does it feel to know you are part of a cultural group that shares many ideas and beliefs?
- How would you describe your culture to someone who knows nothing about it?
- What is the definition of culture? Is there one American culture?
- What are some things that you do that you learned from your culture?
- What can you do to learn about and understand other cultures?
- Discuss ways that your culture, gender, or generation needs to be better understood, appreciated, or celebrated.
- Who were the original inhabitants of our area, and what contributions did they make?
- Through the years, what cultural groups have come to our community? What are some of the features of our community that represent these groups (e.g., architecture, place names, types of restaurants, religious organizations)?
- Are there different cultural ways for thinking about mathematical concepts (such as measurement, counting, computation, fractions, probability, geometry, money, and calendar time)?
- Are there different cultural ways for thinking about scientific concepts (such as health and medicine, constellations)?
- Name an historical figure you admire and explain why you admire that person.
- What does someone need to know about your learning style?
- What languages do you speak? What are the benefits of knowing those languages? How do other languages compare with English?
- Social mores are the “rights” and “wrongs” in a culture group. Do different culture groups have different mores? What impact does this have on communication between cultural groups?
- What if you were part of another culture? How might you be different from the way you are now?
- Does culture explain why other people sometimes seem to act differently? Are all of our behaviors related to culture?
- How does culture influence textbook writers and publishers?