

Culturally Responsive Practices

It has been found that students of color are at an increased risk of psychological distress, suicide, problem behavior, and decreased academic success as compared to their peers (Aud et al., 2011; Blake et al., 2011; Cholewa et al., 2014). Culturally responsive educational practices have developed as a way to improve the sense of belonging, engagement, and academic achievement of students with diverse cultural backgrounds (Cholewa et al., 2014; Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011). According to Cholewa et al. (2014), culturally responsive practices in the classroom involve using language that is respectful of diverse cultures, building on existing knowledge and familiar communication styles of diverse students, and integrating music and dance.

Educators' use of culturally responsive practices can help students feel more excitement towards the curriculum. One teacher, Mrs. Morris, drew from her students' funds of knowledge to enhance her curriculum and pedagogy in a predominantly African-American school (Cholewa et al., 2014). She incorporated African-American values, such as communalism, and music and dance styles popular among African-American students. She also used a call and response communication style to engage her students in answering questions. The energy and vitality she created through her culturally responsive practices led to an increased sense of zest and engagement in her classroom (Cholewa et al., 2014).

Similarly, one social studies teacher incorporated his students' cultural backgrounds into his history lessons (Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011). Students particularly enjoyed his lessons on the history of the origin and evolution of the usage of the "N word" and his rap version of the Declaration of Independence, and field trips to the African American Research Library and a Tortilla Factory. Many students reported that these activities were engaging, fun, and helped them feel valued and understood (Sampson & Garrison-Wade, 2011).

As you evaluate your use of culturally responsive educational practices, it is important to know your students and adapt your lessons accordingly. The Greater Good Science Center at the University of Berkeley recommends considering the what, who, why and how of your teaching and asking yourself questions such as:

- *"Are there stereotypes or prejudices that this lesson or practice may implicitly promote?"*
- *"How is this lesson or practice relevant to all of my students?"*
- *"How might my beliefs about this topic, lesson, and/or practice differ from my students' and their families' beliefs? Does this practice privilege my values over theirs in any way?"*

References:

Cholewa, B., Goodman, R.D., West-Olatunji, C., & Amatea, E. (2014). A qualitative examination of the impact of culturally responsive educational practices on the psychological well-being of students

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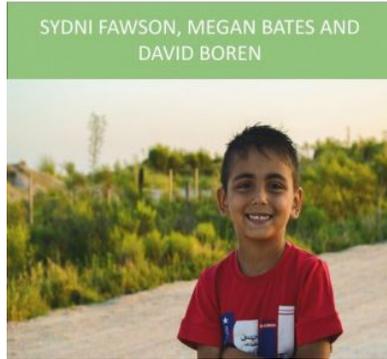
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SYDNI FAWSON, MEGAN BATES AND
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Fawson, S., Bates, M., & Boren, D. M. (n.d.). *Addressing Wellbeing In Schools*. EdTech Books. https://edtechbooks.org/addressing_wellbeing