“I Hate You, and I Hate This School”
The Argument for Cultural Proficiency in Developing Culturally Responsive Classroom Management

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Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Scholars and teacher educators generally agree mastery of content and pedagogical knowledge is essential for effective teaching. Howard (1999) stated it well, “We cannot teach what we don’t know.”

We argue Howard’s admonition applies to knowledge of student’s cultural backgrounds. Yet, the data suggest too many teachers are inadequately prepared to interact with the growing diverse student populations of the United States. We propose, “We cannot teach those we do not know.”
What Do the Data Indicate?

• The Data Snapshot published by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, (2014) found,

• Black children represent 18% of preschool enrollment, but 48% of preschool children receiving more than one out-of-school suspension.

• In comparison, White students represent 43% of preschool enrollment, but 26% of preschool children receiving more than one out of school suspension.
Data, Continued

Disproportionately high suspension/expulsion rates for students of color:

- Black students represent 16% of the student population, but 42% of students receiving multiple out of school suspensions and 34% of students receiving expulsions.

- American Indian and Native-Alaskan students are also disproportionally suspended and expelled, representing less than 1% of the student population, but 2% of out-of-school suspensions and 3% of expulsions.

- Hispanic/Latino of any race represent 24% of the student population, but 21% of students receiving multiple out of school suspensions and 22% of expulsions.

- In comparison, White students represent 51% of the student population, but 31% of students receiving multiple suspensions and 36% of expulsions.
Classroom Teacher Data

Data from the Center for American Progress, (2014) found,

• Over the past three years, the demographic divide between teachers and students of color has increased by 3 percentage points, and today, students of color make up almost half of the public school population. But, teachers of color are just 18 percent of the teaching population. This is a 1 percentage point increase from three years ago.

In addition, The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Professional Education Data System Survey, (PEDS),(2013) found,

“Bachelor’s degrees in education were awarded to predominantly White candidates (82%).”
Implications for Teacher Education

• The data indicate a need for our pre-service teacher candidates to go beyond basic cultural awareness. First year teachers must enter the field with strong cultural pedagogical skills in order to develop cultural synchronicity with the diverse student populations of today and tomorrow.

• We argue, in order for students to demonstrate growth and reach cultural competency, the Cultural Proficiency Continuum must be an integral part of the pre-service teacher candidate curriculum.
A Strong Argument for Cultural Proficiency

“Listening requires not only open eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds. We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs, It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start the dialogue.”

Lisa Delpit
What is Cultural Proficiency?

- A way of being enabling both individuals and organizations to respond effectively to people who differ from them.

- Cultural Proficiency is not an off-the-shelf program. It is an approach; it provides tools and help for succeeding in an increasingly diverse world.

- The use of specific tools effectively describing, responding to, and planning for issues that emerge in diverse environments.

- Policies and practices at the organizational level and values, beliefs, and behaviors at the individual level enabling effective cross cultural interactions among a learning community.
The Continuum

The Cultural Proficiency Continuum identifies the range of values and behaviors of an individual and/or the policies and practices of an organization reflecting their response to diversity.

There are six points in the Cultural Proficiency Continuum

- Cultural Destructiveness
- Cultural Incapacity
- Cultural Blindness
- Cultural Pre-Competence
- Cultural Competence
- Cultural Proficiency
Cultural Proficiency Continuum

Downward Spiral Conversation

Incapacity

Destructiveness

Pre-Competence

Blindness

Competence

Proficiency

Upward Spiral Conversation
Cultural Destructiveness

See the difference, stomp it out

- Definition: Policy, practice, or behavior that effectively eliminates all vestiges of other people’s cultures.

- Historical example: Native American children being forbidden to speak their native language or practice their culture while being forced to assimilate completely to the dominant cultural.

- Classroom example: A classroom where only the dominant culture is taught/studied. No other point of view is represented or permitted.
Cultural Incapacity

*See the Difference, Make it Wrong*

- Definition: Treatment of members of dominated groups based on stereotypes and belief that the dominant group is inherently superior.
- Historical example: White supremacy groups, other hate groups
- Classroom example: A teacher who has low expectations of his/her minority students, students asking a minority student in an honors/challenge class, “How did you get in here?”
Cultural Blindness

*See the Difference, Act Like You Don’t*

- Definition: Failure to see or acknowledge the differences among and between groups. This is the belief that color and culture make no difference and that all people are the same.

- Historical example: Testing Bias

- Classroom example: A teacher who says, “I treat all students the same.”
Cultural Pre-Competence

See the Difference, Respond Inappropriately

• Definition: A recognition that one’s skills and practices are limited when interacting with other cultural groups.

• Historical example: Police departments delegating “fact finding” to a special committee to investigate issues of racial bias, with limited or no solid solutions.

• Classroom example: Having lowered expectations of student’s behavior or academic achievement based on their race/ethnicity, family background, teacher makes excuses for student rather than holding student accountable.
Cultural Competence

See the Difference, Understand the Difference, Difference Makes

• Definition: Acceptance and respect for difference, continuing self-assessment regarding culture, careful attention to the dynamics of difference, continuous expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, and a variety of adaptation to belief systems, policies, and practices.

• We can no longer focus on historical examples. We must plan a course of action for our future.
Cultural Proficiency

• **See the Differences and Respond Positively, Engage and Adapt**

• Definition: Knowing how to learn and teach about different groups, having the capacity to teach and to learn about differences in ways that acknowledge and honor all the people and the groups they represent, holding culture in high esteem, and seeking to add to the knowledge base of culturally proficient practice by conducting research, developing new approaches based on culture, and increasing the knowledge of others about culture and the dynamics of difference.