Teaching Strategies: Culturally Relevant and Responsive Teaching

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Teaching are teaching methodologies that address the need to support academic success for all students from a diversity of cultural backgrounds. This document is not meant to be comprehensive or prescriptive, but provides a general outline of these teaching strategies and offers some ways you might incorporate them into your courses.

- Overview: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
- Overview: Culturally Responsive Teaching
- Variations on this Strategy

Overview: Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

The three criteria for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) as outlined by Ladson-Billings (1995) include the ability to support academic success, foster students' cultural competence, and teach critical inquiry of knowledge and sociopolitical contexts (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Three Criteria of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy
- **Academic Achievement:** Teachers who practice CRP focus on quality, high-level student learning. Culturally relevant pedagogues believe that all students are capable of high academic achievement and hold their students to high standards.
- **Cultural Competence:** CRP practitioners provide an environment and opportunities for students to embrace their own culture and acquire fluency and facility in at least one other culture.
- **Critical Consciousness:** Culturally relevant pedagogues help students make connections from their learning to its application in their real-world lives and to question critically what and how they learn. (Greenberg, 2015; Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Ladson-Billings (1995) suggests teachers can begin to engage in CRP through identifying and understanding their own and others' culture and how it influences learning, educational systems, and teaching practice. As teachers engage in ongoing professional development in CRP, they must analyze their own beliefs and teaching practice and question the nature of curriculum, society, and the educational system through this lens.

Overview: Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) is defined by Gay (2002) as "using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (p. 106). This definition assumes that when learning is contextualized to be more

personally meaningful, it becomes more interesting, easier, and leads to higher achievement (Gay, 2002).

Five Elements of Culturally Responsive Teaching:
- **Developing a cultural diversity knowledge base.** Go beyond awareness. Build a factual knowledge base of multicultural education theory as well as the characteristics and contributions of diverse ethnic groups to various disciplines.
- **Developing culturally relevant curricula:** Analyze and improve the quality of formal curriculum through a diversity lens including curriculum content, role models, examples, images and engage students in critical analysis of the inaccurate messages about ethnically diverse people.
- **Demonstrating caring:** Build a classroom environment that is comfortable and welcoming for diverse students. Use students' own experiences and backgrounds to culturally scaffold learning of diverse students. Demonstrate genuine caring such that all students are expected to achieve at a high level.
- **Communicating with ethnically diverse students**: Learn how communication styles, patterns of task engagement, and organization of ideas of different ethnic groups relate to cultural values and student learning behavior. Learn how to modify interactions to communicate effectively with diverse students.
- **Responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction:** Match your teaching methods to the diverse learners in your class. Methodological choices are made and dynamically adapted based on the characteristics and responsiveness of diverse students. (Gay, 2002)

Variations

This section outlines just a few ways you might begin to think about adopting the aforementioned teaching strategy and the tools you might consider.

- **D2L Brightspace:** Use Discussions to engage learners and get to know your students' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and values at the beginning of a course. Use learning analytics in Class Progress to dynamically make decisions about the responsiveness of students to activities and assignments. Use this information to make adjustments to methodology and curriculum in an agile, data-informed way. Use Rubrics and Announcements to communicate clear and high expectations for achievement to all learners. Use Intelligent Agents to identify and send kudos messages to students when they've been successful.
- **MediaSpace (Kaltura):** Use screen capture/web cam videos to allow students to get to know you and be your authentic self and demonstrate genuine caring and belief in students' abilities to be successful. Give students the option to use screen capture/web cam videos to share their authentic selves.
- **Open Educational Resources (OER):** Use OERs to build customized curriculum and activities

that includes content on diverse ethnic groups' contributions to your discipline, utilizes diverse images, roles models, and incorporates students' own experiences and backgrounds into learning.

- **Audience Response System (Poll Everywhere):** Adapt to diverse communication styles by using an audience response system as a back channel that allows all students opportunity to contribute, ask questions, and have a voice in your classroom.
- **Online Equity Rubric:** You might find this rubric developed at Peralta Community College helpful for assessing and improving the cultural responsiveness of your online course.

References

Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education, 53*(2), 106-116. doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053002003

Greenberg, B. [The Brainwaves Video Anthology]. (2015, October 23). Gloria Ladson-Billings - Successful Teachers of African American Children [Video file]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/hmAZjNRmalI

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