CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATION PLAYBOOK

CONDENSED VERSION

WHAT IS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATION?

NMSI's definition of Culturally Responsive Education echoes the work of Geneva Gay and Zaretta Hammond. Culturally responsive education is using students' "cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference and performance styles to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them." We conceive "culture" as the lens through which each individual views the world, a lens impacted by the intersectionality of their identity components (including, but not limited to race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic class, gender and sexuality) and their lived experiences.

We believe that all students are complex and knowledgeable, carrying with them meaningful past experiences that should inform their classroom experiences. We believe Hammond's claim of culturally responsive edudcation is a pedagogical approach firmly rooted in learning theory and cognitive science and resonate with her focus on relationships among students, teachers and communities as cornerstones in this work.

We believe that teachers and educators must aim to provide all students with the scaffolds that "promote effective information processing" and build students' "intellective capacity," ensuring that they become increasingly independent learners with strong higher-order thinking skills.

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EXPLICIT ACTIVATION OF AND CONNECTING TO PRIOR KNOWLEDGE OR STUDENT EXPERIENCES

DESCRIPTION

Teach new concepts to students by building from their previous knowledge or experiences, so students can see the connections to the new material easily.

WHY USE IT

Building from prior knowledge allows students to make better sense of the new – but related – information.

Valuing students' experiences creates an inclusive classroom culture and establishes a community of learners.

WHEN TO USE THIS METHOD

The beginning of a lesson or activity! Learning new information can be confusing for some students, but connecting fresh content with previous experiences makes it easier to process what they learned.

Additional Reading: Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students.

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VISIBLE OR AUDIBLE THINKING

DESCRIPTION

Solving problems takes a series of steps, but those steps can look different for every student. Learn to "see" what students are thinking and have them annotate a text or document their thought process to a math problem. During a one-on-one or small group intervention, ask students to verbalize their problem-solving steps. Example questions to ask:

- What steps have you taken so far?
- Tell me what you need to do here?
- Can you explain your thinking on this question?
- How did you get here?

WHY USE IT

Teachers can identify strengths and gaps more clearly and meet students where they are in their learning.

Teachers can avoid the error of doing the thinking for students.

Reflecting on their thought process positions students on a pathway to become independent learners.

Placing value on the process of learning is as important as arriving at the "right" answers.

WHEN TO USE THIS METHOD

Use this strategy after introducing new material and as a means to gauge how deeply students understand a concept or idea. Possible methods include:

- Annotating a text
- Completing graphic organizers
- Documenting all steps for problem-solving
- Providing rationales for answer choices
- Group discussions
- Affinity mapping
- Mind mapping

METACOGNITIVE PRACTICES

DESCRIPTION

Metacognition is a fancy word for "thinking about thinking." Applying this practice guides students to identify what they know, what they need to know, how they learn and how to measure progress in their learning.

WHY USE IT

Metacognitive practices help students build a habit of examining their learning to develop strategies for learning gaps.

Metacognitive habits facilitate student independence by adapting to new situations with more confidence.

Incorporating metacognitive moments in the classroom allows students to take ownership over their learning, thus creating a learning partnership between the teacher and student.

WHEN TO USE THIS METHOD

Make metacognitive thinking a habit during classroom and individual learning. Set aside time for students to reflect on what or how they learn and pose questions that guide their thinking about thinking. Many teachers practice this in the form of an exit ticket, which can determine additional learning needs.

Additional Reading:
What Is Metacognition? A Guide for Educators
Good Thinking! — That's so Meta(cognitive)! [video]
Ten Metacognitive Teaching Strategies

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WRITING FOR AUTHENTIC AUDIENCES

DESCRIPTION

Strengthen students' writing skills by having them write for authentic audiences. For example, assign students to critique young adult books on Amazon, design environmental preservation posters for the school hallway or create a podcast explaining a scientific phenomenon. These assignments emphasize student voices and position them as agents of change in and outside of the school.

WHY USE IT

Writing for real audiences creates authenticity and meaning to school work, which builds student engagement.

Removing the line between school and community creates a genuine experience of the 'real' world.

Writing for an authentic audience is a critical skill to succeed in AP® English and helps students become more independent analyzers of rhetoric beyond high school.

WHEN TO USE THIS METHOD

As often as possible! Many teachers use this type of assignment as a culminating assessment.

Additional Reading:
Creating Authentic Audiences for Writing Students
The Value of Authentic Audiences
Creating an Authentic Audience for Student Work

COMMUNAL TALK AND TASK STRUCTURES

DESCRIPTION

This method guides students to learn from each other through structured discussion and colloabration.

Whether it's in a small group, in pairs or a whole-class discussion, students can gain new perspectives through other students' experiences.

WHY USE IT

Discussing ideas and working together establishes a collaborative and communal space built on learning. *See think-pair-share activity on page 9.*

Adopting a structured discussion, such as a debate, gives students a purpose to collaborate and makes the conversations more deliberate.

WHEN TO USE THIS METHOD

Communal talk and tasks structures can be used any time during a lesson. Whether students are grappling with a new concept or applying their understanding of a new concept to use, structured conversations reinforces studentss' learning and promotes social growth.

Additional Reading:
Talk Activities Flowchart
Debate Structure
Culturally Responsive Teaching Tip Puts Rigor at the Center

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POPSICLE STICKS

DESCRIPTION

Popsicle sticks is a discussion activity tool that minimizes teacher bias.
How it works:

1 Ask each student to write their name on a popsicle stick during class

2 Collect all the sticks

3 When posing a question to the whole class, pull a popsicle stick at random instead of asking for a show of hands, so students are called upon equally!

WHY USE IT

Research suggests that teachers are likely to call on students they perceive as struggling for only low-level answers. This discussion tool ensures equitable participation and removes potential bias.

WHEN TO USE THIS METHOD

Popsicle sticks are ideal for asking a student's opinion during a group discussion or reviewing previously learned material. Best of all, the popsicle stick method removes potential bias and engages with randomly selected students.

THINK-PAIR-SHARE

DESCRIPTION

Think-pair-share is an activity involving written and verbal collaborative work that promotes engaging meaningful conversations amongst students. How it works:

1 Ask students to respond a question by writing down their thoughts

2 Pair students up and share their responses

3 Finally, each pair will share their findings in table groups or with the entire class

WHY USE IT

This type of collaborative work promotes confidence, gets everyone in class to participate and supports thoughtful discussions

WHEN TO USE THIS METHOD

There are several ways to incorporate think-pair-share.

- Tap into students' previous knowledge before introducing new material
- Gauge students' reaction after watching an educational film
- Gauge students' understanding after reading a short text
- Gather ideas or formalize procedures before students begin an assignment (essay, lab or a set of word problems)

Additional Reading:
Using the Think-Pair-Share Technique
Think-Pair-Share

Bring more culturally responsive education into your classrooms!

Students are the heart of why you do what you do. We built this playbook to show you how to implement CRE into your classrooms. If you're intrigued with what you see, we offer professional development for teachers and bake CRE into all our training.

Learn more about NMSI

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