

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING WITHIN A MONTESSORI LEARNING
ENVIRONMENT

by

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Project Summary

The title of my capstone project is *Culturally Responsive Teaching within a Montessori Learning Environment*, and the research question it attempts to answer is *how might the use of Culturally Responsive Teaching within a Montessori learning environment help eliminate the academic achievement gap between white students and students of color?*

The basis for the project was three teacher professional development sessions whereby I helped teachers see the significant role culture plays in education and how adapting Culturally Responsive Teaching strategies could eliminate the academic achievement gap that exists at my school. The slideshows I created focused on 1) the need for teachers to see themselves as cultural beings; 2) the importance of acknowledging the cultures of all their students; 3) the impact race and racism have on students of color; 4) and how CRT teaching strategies engage students of color; and why being a Montessori School should motivate us to be more culturally responsive.

The intended audience of the presentations was the licensed teaching staff at the school. It was presented over three sessions during monthly professional development. The audience consisted of classroom teachers, specialist teachers, special education teachers, school administrators, instructional specialists, and educational assistants. Because 3rd grade classes had the most ELLs and because the move from 2nd grade is at times a difficult transition for students to make, I met with this team three times over the course of the semester to get feedback on their implementation of CRT practices.

I created three slide shows; one for each of my presentations. The first slideshow focused on the impact culture has on education. The second slideshow discussed the effect race and racism have on students of color. And the final slide looked at the Culturally Responsive teaching strategies and how they align with Montessori teaching philosophy. Each slideshow consisted of material from my capstone, one video relating to the topic being addressed, and time for teachers to discuss their own ideas. In addition to the slideshows I provided teachers with a toolkit that they could use as a resource for helping them get started with incorporating CRT practices in their classrooms. At the end of each slideshow I handed out surveys to each participant to get an idea of how they felt about Culturally Responsive Teaching. These surveys helped me plan for my next presentation and they let me know how committed teachers were acknowledging their students' cultures in their teaching.

APPENDIX A

CRT Teacher Toolkit

Videos of Culturally Responsive Teaching

- *Introduction to Culturally Relevant Pedagogy*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGTVjJuRaZ8> video
Education experts Jackie Jordan Irvine, Geneva Gay and Kris Gutierrez explain how to make culturally relevant pedagogy a reality in the classroom.
- *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy by Gloria Ladson Billings*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4HR8NEPK7I0> video
Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings discusses her three criteria for Culturally Responsive Teaching: Cultural competence, academic achievement, and socio-political consciousness.
- *Dr. Geneva Gray Discusses Culturally Responsive Pedagogy*
<http://www.inspirationforinstruction.org/culturally-responsive.html>
Dr. Geneva Gay discusses the evolution of Culturally Responsive Teaching.
- *Bridging the Cultural Divide Between Students and Teachers*
<http://www.inspirationforinstruction.org/culturally-responsive.html>
The PBS Newshour reports on the use of Culturally Responsive teaching in Chicago public schools.

Academic journal articles

- *Culturally responsive teaching in special education for ethnically diverse students: setting the stage*
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0951839022000014349?casa_token=IMjf1dL78AwAAAAA%3AD0D57GXYa1ixP_VH6o4MW_FrH4bHI1ZYwked5ubFnY71UJqrBiwo0nRED12gEzPZTGhyx8_tN068SQ&
In this article, several components of ‘culturally responsive teaching’ are explained, along with some research about its effects on student achievement. These include critical cultural consciousness of teachers, culturally pluralistic classroom climates, diverse communities of learners, and multicultural curriculum and instruction.

- *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Implications for Educational Justice*

<https://www.mdpi.com/2227-7102/6/4/35/htm>

This article raises an important overriding question: How can we realize the goal of educational justice in the field of teaching?

- *Reading dual language books: Improving early literacy skills in linguistically diverse classrooms*

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1476718X12449453>

Research has determined that dual language books have a positive effect on literacy achievement, motivation, and family involvement in children's schooling.

- *The relationship between language and identity. The use of the home language as a human right of an immigrant*

<https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/4070/407042009004.pdf>

The paper studies the correlation between language and identity from the perspective of researches made regarding the theme, as well as the author's personal and professional experiences as a Hispanic in the United States.

- *The Impact of Racism on Child and Adolescent Health.*

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/144/2/e20191765.full.p>

The objective of this policy statement is to provide an evidence-based document focused on the role of racism in child and adolescent development and health outcomes.

The development of a model of culturally responsive science and mathematics teaching

<https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11422-013-9544-1.pdf>

The model of culturally responsive teaching contains five thematic categories: (1) content integration, (2) facilitating knowledge construction, (3) prejudice reduction, (4) social justice, and (5) academic development.

- *Addressing the Achievement Gap and Disproportionality Through the Use of Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices*

http://www.inspirationforinstruction.org/uploads/1/3/1/2/13121092/addressing_the_gap.pdf

This article provides a practical tool to encourage teachers and school staff to engage in reflective, culturally responsive practices.

- *Students of Color and Public Montessori Schools: A Review of the Literature*

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1161350.pdf>

This article examines the relevant literature related to the experiences of students of color in public Montessori schools. Research finds Montessori education offers both opportunities and limitations for students of color in attending diverse schools.

- *Early Evaluation Findings From the Instructional Conversation Study: Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcomes for Diverse Learners in Elementary School*

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1180090.pdf>

This study explores preliminary results from a pedagogical intervention designed to improve instruction for all students, particularly emergent bilinguals in the United States (or English language learners).

- *Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Literature for Primary Grade English Learners*

https://digitalcommons.hamline.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1402&context=hse_cp

This capstone project answers the question: How might culturally responsive teaching (CRT) strategies and reading culturally authentic texts increase student capacity to identify with and engage in learning for small groups of kindergarten and first grade ELs?

Somali Children and Families

- *The Somali Literacy Project*

<https://thesomaliliteracyproject.com>

This website broadly covers the following areas about how to best serve Somali students: education (early childhood, K-12, special & higher), language and literacy, diversity & cultural competence, disability & inclusion, play, identity & belonging, reimagined curricula, social-emotional competence & mental health.

- *Culturally-Responsive Approaches for Working with Somali Children*

<https://reclaimingthelanguage.wordpress.com/2015/03/07/culturally-responsive-approaches-for-working-with-somali-children/>

Websites pertaining to Culturally Responsive Teaching strategies

- *Inspiration for Instruction/ Culturally Responsive Teaching*

<http://www.inspirationforinstruction.org/culturally-responsive.html>

This website contains videos and articles explaining the importance of Culturally Responsive Teaching.

- *National Association of the Education of Young Children/ Culturally Responsive Teaching strategies*

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2016/culturally-responsive-strategies>

This article describes five culturally responsive core strategies to promote positive teacher relationships with young children in preschool and minimize challenging behavior.

- *Brown University- Teaching Diverse Learners*

<https://www.brown.edu/academics/education-alliance/teaching-diverse-learners/strategies-0/culturally-responsive-teaching-0>

This website discusses in depth, seven characteristics of good Culturally Responsive Teaching.

- <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/culturally-responsive-teaching/teacher-competencies-that-promote-culturally-responsive-teaching>

New America/ Culturally Responsive Teaching

This website identifies eight competencies that clarify what teachers should know and be able to do in light of research on culturally responsive teaching.

- *Equity Assistance Center Northwest/ Culturally Responsive Teaching*

<https://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/culturally-responsive-teaching-508.pdf>

This website looks at the qualities of an effective Culturally Responsive teacher and the ways teachers can communicate high expectations of all their students.

- *15 Culturally-Responsive Teaching Strategies and Examples*

<https://www.prodigygame.com/blog/culturally-responsive-teaching/>

This website gives 15 teaching strategies to be an effective Culturally Responsive teacher.

- *Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies*

<https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Documents/culturally%20relevant%20teaching%20strategies.pdf>

This website contains the preconditions, teacher characteristics, and teaching strategies for effective Culturally Responsive Teaching.

Children's Books centered around CRT

- *20 Picture Books for 2020: Readings to Embrace Race, Provide Solace & Do Good*

<https://www.embracerace.org/resources/20-picture-books-for-2020>

This list of children's books to help engage the broad range of emotions and needs of diverse children in our multiracial society.

- *22 Diverse Book Choices for All Grade Levels*

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/22-diverse-book-choices-all-grade-levels>

This book list is to help engage the broad range of emotions and needs of diverse children in our multiracial society.

- *Curriculum Collections at Lewis Library: Multicultural/ Culturally-Responsive books*

https://libguides.luc.edu/curriculum_collection/multicultural

This website contains an extensive list of multicultural books and resources.

CRT in an Online Classroom

- *Culturally Responsive Teaching in the Online Classroom*

<https://elearnmag.acm.org/archive.cfm?aid=3274756>

This article examines basic principles of culturally responsive teaching in the context of e-learning. It focuses on practical ideas for instructors interested in developing their own culturally responsive online teaching skills.

- *Online Teaching Can Be Culturally Responsive*

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/online-teaching-can-be-culturally-responsive>

Amid school closures, online classes can offer new opportunities for culturally responsive teaching. This article gives an example of what one educator is trying with her fifth grade students.

Teaching Tolerance and CRT

This list of articles from the website *Teaching Tolerance* addresses the need for Culturally Responsive teaching and how to implement it in the classroom.

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/antiracist-work-in-schools-are-you-in-it-for-the-long-haul>

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/online-teaching-can-be-culturally-responsive>

<https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/being-culturally-responsive>

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2020/how-culturally-responsive-lessons-teach-critical-thinking>

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/teaching-thanksgiving-in-a-socially-responsible-way>

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/cultural-responsiveness-starts-with-real-caring>

APPENDIX B

Presentation Slide Show

https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1lpPCsgdoFAfIIZ1Y6FnbIBDI19xpTsiT8DI4f5lq6HE/edit#slide=id.g8b35d03aec_0_35

APPENDIX C

Teacher Survey

1. How easy do you find interacting with students at your school who are from a different cultural background than your own?	Not all easy	Somewhat easy	Very easy
2. How comfortable would you be incorporating new material about people from different backgrounds into your curriculum?	Not all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable
3. How knowledgeable are you regarding where to find resources for working with students from different cultural and language backgrounds?	Not at all knowledgeable	Somewhat knowledgeable	Very knowledgeable
4. If students from different backgrounds struggled to get along in your class, how comfortable would you be intervening	Not at all comfortable	Somewhat comfortable	Very comfortable

<p>5. In response to events that might be occurring in the world, how comfortable would you be having conversations about race with your students?</p>	<p>Not at all comfortable</p>	<p>Somewhat comfortable</p>	<p>Very comfortable</p>
<p>6. How comfortable would you be having a student who could not communicate well with anyone in class because his/her home language was unique?</p>	<p>Not comfortable at all</p>	<p>Somewhat comfortable</p>	<p>Very comfortable</p>
<p>7. When a sensitive issue of diversity arises in class, how easily can you think of strategies to address the situation?</p>	<p>Not at all easily</p>	<p>Somewhat easily</p>	<p>Very easily</p>
<p>8. How important do you think it is that the school's culture reflects the diversity of its students?</p>	<p>Not at all important</p>	<p>Somewhat important</p>	<p>Very important</p>
<p>9. How willing are you to incorporate some Culturally Responsive Teaching strategies in your classroom?</p>	<p>Not at all willing</p>	<p>Somewhat willing</p>	<p>Very willing</p>
<p>10. How valuable did you find this professional development presentation?</p>	<p>Not at all valuable</p>	<p>Somewhat valuable</p>	<p>Very valuable</p>

