

## Culturally Responsive Teaching



Terese C. Aceves  
Loyola Marymount University

Michael J. Orosco  
University of California-Riverside

**July 2014**  
CEEDAR Document No. IC-2



Office of Special Education Programs  
U.S. Department of Education

Disclaimer:

This content was produced under U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, Award No. H325A120003. Bonnie Jones and David Guardino serve as the project officers. The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education. No official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education of any product, commodity, service, or enterprise mentioned in this website is intended or should be inferred.

Recommended Citation:

Aceves, T. C., & Orosco, M. J. (2014). *Culturally responsive teaching* (Document No. IC-2). Retrieved from University of Florida, Collaboration for Effective Educator, Development, Accountability, and Reform Center website:  
<http://cedar.education.ufl.edu/tools/innovation-configurations/>

Note: There are no copyright restrictions on this document; however, please use the proper citation.



The CEEDAR Center

University of Florida  
360 Norman Hall  
PO Box 117050  
Gainesville, FL 32611

[www.ceedar.org](http://www.ceedar.org)  
[ceedar@coe.ufl.edu](mailto:ceedar@coe.ufl.edu)  
352.273.4259



---

## Table of Contents

List of Tables .....	5
Innovation Configuration for Culturally Responsive Teaching.....	6
Definition of Culturally Responsive Teaching .....	7
Relevant Themes of Culturally Responsive Teaching.....	9
Instructional Engagement .....	9
Culture, Language, and Racial Identity .....	9
Multicultural Awareness.....	10
High Expectations.....	11
Critical Thinking.....	11
Social Justice.....	12
Emerging Evidence-Based Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices.....	13
Collaborative Teaching .....	13
Responsive Feedback .....	14
Modeling.....	15
Instructional Scaffolding .....	16
Recommended Culturally Responsive Teaching Approaches and Considerations .....	17
Problem-Solving Approach .....	17
Child-Centered Instruction.....	18
Assessments .....	19
Materials .....	20
Conclusion .....	21
References.....	23



---

Appendix: Culturally Responsive Teaching Innovation Configuration .....	33
---	----



---

List of Tables

Table 1: Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices ..... 9



---

## Innovation Configuration for Culturally Responsive Teaching

This paper features an innovation configuration (IC) matrix that can guide teacher preparation professionals in the development of appropriate culturally responsive teaching (CRT) content. This matrix appears in the Appendix.

With the implementation of any innovation comes a continuum of configurations of implementation from non-use to the ideal. ICs are organized around two dimensions: essential components and degree of implementation (Hall & Hord, 1987; Roy & Hord, 2004). Essential components of the IC—along with descriptors and examples to guide application of the criteria to course work, standards, and classroom practices—are listed in the rows of the far left column of the matrix. Several levels of implementation are defined in the top row of the matrix. For example, no mention of the essential component is the lowest level of implementation and would receive a score of zero. Increasing levels of implementation receive progressively higher scores.

ICs have been used in the development and implementation of educational innovations for at least 30 years (Hall & Hord, 2001; Hall, Loucks, Rutherford, & Newton, 1975; Hord, Rutherford, Huling-Austin, & Hall, 1987; Roy & Hord, 2004). Experts studying educational change in a national research center originally developed these tools, which are used for professional development (PD) in the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM). The tools have also been used for program evaluation (Hall & Hord, 2001; Roy & Hord, 2004).

Use of this tool to evaluate course syllabi can help teacher preparation leaders ensure that they emphasize proactive, preventative approaches instead of exclusive reliance on behavior reduction strategies. The IC included in the Appendix of this paper is designed for teacher preparation programs, although it can be modified as an observation tool for PD purposes.

The Collaboration for Effective Educator, Development, Accountability, and Reform (CEEDAR) Center ICs are extensions of the seven ICs originally created by the National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality (NCCTQ). NCCTQ professionals wrote the above description.



---

A large and increasing proportion (i.e., 48% in 2011 compared to 39% in 2001) of the student population in the United States comes from homes that are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). This demographic change has created cause for concern as research shows that a student's race, ethnicity, cultural background, and other variables (e.g., poverty, assessment practices, systemic issues, lack of PD opportunities for teachers, institutional racism) significantly influence the student's achievement (e.g., Harry & Klingner, 2006; Orosco & Klingner, 2010; Skiba et al., 2011).

Addressing the unique needs of CLD students is one of the major challenges facing public education today because many teachers are inadequately prepared (e.g., with relevant content knowledge, experience, training) to address CLD students' learning needs (e.g., Au, 2009; Cummins, 2007). This inadequate preparation can create a cultural gap between teachers and students (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009) and can limit educators' abilities to choose effective instructional practices or materials because way too often, teachers and instructional contexts are developed to benefit students from White middle and high socioeconomic status (SES) backgrounds, voiding the cultural and linguistic characteristics of diverse learners (Orosco, 2010; Orosco & O'Connor, 2011). CRT, defined in the next section, can help address this disparity.

### **Definition of Culturally Responsive Teaching**

In defining CRT, it is important to draw from the work of Gay (2010), Nieto, Bode, Kang, and Raible (2008), and Ladson-Billings (2009). Teachers who utilize CRT practices value students' cultural and linguistic resources and view this knowledge as capital to build upon rather than as a barrier to learning. These teachers use this capital (i.e., personal experiences and interests) as the basis for instructional connections to facilitate student learning and development. Teachers who use CRT apply interactive, collaborative teaching methods, strategies, and ways of



---

interacting that support CLD students' cultural, linguistic, and racial experiences and integrate the methods with evidence-based practices (EBPs; e.g., Harlin & Souto-Manning, 2009; Hersi & Watkinson, 2012; Nieto et al., 2008; Santamaria, 2009).

The student population in United States public schools is becoming increasingly CLD; however, teachers and school leaders remain fairly monoracial (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). In 2012, 83% percent of full-time public school teachers were White, 7% were Black, 7% were Hispanic, and 1% were Asian (Aud, Hussar, Johnson, Kena, & Roth, 2013). This one-sided shift has led practitioners to examine research on CRT for CLD students. Research is slowly emerging to identify EBPs for students from CLD backgrounds (Orosco & O'Connor, 2011). For this IC, we reviewed empirical research articles from the current professional literature for the purpose of identifying effective CRT practices. We restricted our review to studies that included at least 50% of CLD students in the sample to ensure adequate representation for interpretation of findings to CLD populations. We also reviewed studies that examined instructional practices with K-12 student outcomes. We did not include in our review any essays, literature reviews, policy and opinion papers, books, or book chapters, although we referred to these resources as part of an established CRT literature base. In this review, we found six general CRT themes (i.e., instructional engagement; culture, language, and racial identity; multicultural awareness; high expectations; critical thinking; and social justice); four CRT practices (i.e., collaborative teaching, responsive feedback, modeling, and instructional scaffolding) that were considered emerging EBPs; two recommended teaching approaches (i.e., problem solving and child-centered instruction); and two instructional considerations (i.e., assessment and materials). The CRT literature supports our findings (see Table 1).





Table 1

*Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices*

Relevant Themes of CRT	Emerging Evidence-Based CRT Practices	Recommended CRT Approaches and Considerations
Instructional Engagement	Collaborative Teaching	Problem-Solving Approach
Culture, Language, and Racial Identity	Responsive Feedback	Child-Centered Instruction
Multicultural Awareness	Modeling	Assessment
High Expectations	Instructional Scaffolding	Materials
Critical Thinking		
Social Justice		

**Relevant Themes of Culturally Responsive Teaching****Instructional Engagement**

The literature indicates that CRT with EBPs can have a powerful impact on CLD students' development because it provides teaching that draws from CLD students' relevant schemas, background knowledge, and home languages; it also allows students to practice what they are taught (e.g., August & Hakuta, 1997; August & Shanahan, 2006). For example, various classroom studies have indicated that students make greater improvement in reading comprehension when teachers intertwine instructional engagement approaches with skills-based practices (i.e., connections between students' cultural and linguistic knowledge and lessons) that assist CLD students with integrating new learning information (e.g., Orosco & O'Connor, 2013).

**Culture, Language, and Racial Identity**

Culture, language, and racial identity refer to the complex constructs that develop from psychologically and socially inherited knowledge and experiences. Enculturation and

---

socialization continually shape culture, language, and racial identity (Irvine & Armento, 2001). Enculturation is the process by which students become knowledgeable of and competent in their communities throughout life, and socialization is the process of behaving based on the accepted norms and values of the culture or society the individual experiences (Pinker, 2002). Language is a body of linguistic knowledge; it is a communication system common to people who are of the same culture (Tomasello, 1999). Language, the communication medium of culture, can be shaped by culture. Racial identity is the sense of one's cultural and linguistic beliefs and values; it can entail a group of people united or classified based on history, nationality, or geographic distribution (Irvine & Armento, 2001). Culture and linguistic experiences can help shape students' identities. Learning may be difficult for many CLD students because many of them encounter formal schooling as separate from their cultural, linguistic, and racial experiences (Au, 2005; Gipe, 2006). Culturally responsive methods provide teachers with the critical understanding of how students' cultural, linguistic, and racial identities develop and how these constructs impact learning.

### **Multicultural Awareness**

CRT requires teachers to use critical multicultural awareness skills to objectively examine their own cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions. This critical reflection provides teachers with a greater understanding, sensitivity, and appreciation of the history, values, experiences, and lifestyles of other cultures. Multicultural awareness becomes central when teachers must interact with students from other cultures. It provides teachers with the skills to gain greater self-awareness, greater awareness of others, and better interpersonal skills; it also helps teachers to more effectively challenge stereotypes and prejudices (Banks, 2004).



---

## High Expectations

In order to help students attain academic success and reach their potential, those practicing CRT must have high expectations for their students. High expectations refer to the ability to communicate clear and specific expectations to students about what they are expected to know and be able to do (Cahnmann, 2005; Cahnmann & Remillard, 2002; Mitchell, 1998). CRT includes creating classrooms that promote genuine respect for students and a belief in their learning capabilities (e.g., Scheurich, 1998). They also provide instructional strategies and curricula that are driven by standards through the use of challenging, engaging exercises that take place within the context of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds (e.g., Hillberg, Tharp, & DeGeest, 2000).

## Critical Thinking

An important component of CRT is the ability to instruct students to think critically. Critical thinking is the ability to think for oneself, apply reasoning and logic to new or unfamiliar ideas, analyze ideas, make inferences, and solve problems (e.g., Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2006). CRT methods provide teachers with the skills to teach students how to become critical thinkers by integrating their cultural and linguistic experiences with challenging learning experiences involving higher order thinking and critical inquiry. For example, in Funds of Knowledge, a well-researched critical thinking mediation (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2013), researchers showed teachers how to integrate their teaching with students' home experiences. One example from this method involved using students' international traveling experiences, along with their parents' skills and knowledge, to reinforce classroom-skills-based instruction by forming native language literacy circles with parents to explain and foster critical analysis skills. In return, the parents applied these skills in conversations with their children to reinforce classroom EBPs. This CRT allowed teachers to look past their own views of the world, better understand the



---

thoughts of others, and form more cogent and well-rounded teaching, which allowed them to improve CLD students' critical thinking skills.

## **Social Justice**

Social justice is the ability to understand and think about the social and political challenges that societies, communities, and individuals face and proactively act upon these challenges (Cochran-Smith, 2004). CRT guides teachers' practices and curricula because it is centered in students' cultures, and it provides an active process for students to seek out information about what is happening in the communities around them, which guides them to better understandings of and better solutions for the inequities encountered in their communities (Irvine, 2002). However, cultural responsiveness goes beyond remedying mismatches from mishandled differences; it uses explicit instruction to help students access valued cultural capital, and it acknowledges that structural inequalities, including disparities in political and economic power, inhibit diverse students from succeeding (Ladson-Billings, 2009). For example, some teachers have taught students about connections between their indigenous cultural heritages in the United States and Mexico, the history of injustice they have encountered, and the acts of resistance and strength by their people (Arce, 2004). Consistent with CRT is a pragmatic focus on what students can do given their current contexts, noting that structural change is a long, slow process (Anyon, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Nonetheless, even if starting at the micro level, culturally responsive educators contribute to structural change (Gay, 2010). Culturally responsive teachers include a strong social-justice component in their instruction through which they help students identify and confront sociopolitical inequities and issues of social power and class privilege. Teachers with a culturally responsive practice also nurture a sense of agency and action in their students (Nieto & Bode, 2012); that is, they instill in them a will and sense of efficacy to foster social change.



---

## **Emerging Evidence-Based Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices**

Research during the past few decades has developed the foundation for EBP that supports teaching for students who struggle with learning basic academic skills. However, despite this research, CLD learners continue to underachieve in United States public schools. This underachievement has led researchers and educators to examine research on the development of EBPs with CRT methods. Although empirical research investigating EBPs for diverse students with learning difficulties has increased, a scant research base in this area remains (Aceves et al., 2014). Research is slowly emerging to identify effective culturally responsive EBPs for students from CLD backgrounds. From the literature we reviewed for this IC, we identified four emerging EBPs for students from CLD backgrounds: (a) collaborative teaching, (b) responsive feedback, (c) modeling, and (d) instructional scaffolding.

### **Collaborative Teaching**

Collaborative teaching is an umbrella term for instructional methods (e.g., cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, peer teaching, reciprocal teaching) that involve joint intellectual effort (i.e., requiring individual accountability, positive interdependence, and strong interpersonal skills) between students and teachers (Klingner & Vaughn, 1996, 1999; O'Connor & Vadasy, 2011; Vaughn et al., 2011). Collaborative learning methods are a key component of CRT; they enable participants to share and learn from their collective experiences and challenges. Research indicates that practitioners who use direct and explicit collaborative-based approaches to learning to reinforce students' background knowledge (e.g., interdependence, sharing, collaboration) improve student literacy engagement and motivation (e.g., Au, 2011; Genesee & Riches, 2006).

In collaborative-based instruction, teachers provide a common introduction to lessons and then distribute learning assignments based on students' academic skills (e.g., reading language



---

level). Although all students learn about the same topic, the assignments may vary according to student ability. Teachers collectively organize students into heterogeneous learning teams by grouping based on learning abilities. After students have read and identified the assignment, they discuss the topic with their group members, share their knowledge, and complete the lesson as a whole group. Teachers monitor and review the key concepts and skills all students should have acquired. If learning challenges persist, teachers may need to reciprocate and teach specific skills for student understanding. For example, there have been several studies (e.g., Calhoon, Al Otaiba, Greenberg, King, & Avalos, 2006; Klingner & Vaughn, 1996; Sáenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005) that have used collaborative-based learning approaches to engage CLD students in small groups in content-related strategic discussion to assist students in understanding concepts, deriving the main ideas, asking and answering questions, and relating what they are learning to their own cultural backgrounds. When students did not have the background knowledge to understand concepts and text passages, they were encouraged to generate questions for understanding that were discussed in small groups with the teacher facilitating comprehension.

### **Responsive Feedback**

Culturally responsive feedback is provided when teachers offer critical, ongoing, and immediate feedback regarding students' responses and participation. Through culturally responsive feedback, teachers supply individualized support regarding performance in a manner sensitive to students' individual and cultural preferences. This strategy includes incorporating students' responses, ideas, languages, and experiences into the feedback that is provided (Gersten & Geva, 2003) while inviting students to construct new understandings regarding what they are learning (McIntyre & Hulan, 2013).

Providing responsive feedback is an instructional strategy recommended as a necessary practice in effective instruction with students experiencing academic difficulty (Fuchs &



---

Vaughn, 2012). Responsive feedback has also been implemented as an important strategy within studies involving English language learners (Carlo et al., 2004; Gerber et al., 2004; Kamps et al., 2007; Vaughn et al., 2006). Prompting students with both affective and cognitive feedback encourages teachers to validate students' contributions while also clarifying and expanding students' statements during instruction (Jiménez & Gersten, 1999).

In order to engage in this critical feedback exchange, teachers must create multiple opportunities for students to respond and fluidly dialogue throughout the day. Scheduling opportunities for individualized teacher-student conferences allows students opportunities to receive individualized teacher feedback. Overall, students benefit from ongoing, specific feedback to increase their self-esteem, monitor their understanding, and challenge their thinking.

### **Modeling**

Teacher modeling has long been viewed as an essential component of effective teaching. As a culturally responsive practice, modeling involves explicit discussion of instructional expectations while providing examples based on students' cultural, linguistic, and lived experiences. Culturally responsive modeling requires teachers to exemplify learning outcomes of CRT, which include strategy use, content learning, metacognitive and critical thinking, and interest and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity.

Research has established the modeling of skills, strategies, and new content as an essential and effective method for teaching English learners (Gerber et al., 2004; Gersten & Geva 2003; Kamps et al., 2007; Vaughn et al., 2006). Similarly, research on CRT practices emphasizes modeling as a key strategy for specific cultural groups (Hilberg, Tharp, & DeGeest, 2000). For example, within American Indian and Alaskan Native communities, learning through observation is an important tradition (Lipka et al., 2005). In an investigation involving indigenous Alaskan youth, researchers observed expert apprentice modeling during math

---

problem-solving activities reflective of this indigenous group's cultural practice (Lipka et al., 2005). Engaging in an essential cultural practice within instruction can validate students' group heritages while demonstrating its importance to academic tasks. Culturally responsive modeling serves to illustrate specific cognitive strategies while drawing from students' cultures, languages, and everyday experiences (Jiménez & Gersten, 1999).

### **Instructional Scaffolding**

Culturally responsive instructional scaffolding occurs when teachers control for task difficulty and promote a deeper level of understanding using students' contributions and their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Scaffolding skills include using different types of questions (e.g., open-ended questions, analytic questions); providing appropriate wait time and taking turns; extending and acknowledging students' responses; and using supporting instructional materials (e.g., visual organizers, story maps; Jiménez & Gersten, 1999).

Researchers have integrated scaffolding methods in studies involving students experiencing academic difficulty, including students who speak a second language (Gerber et al., 2004; Goldenberg, 2013; Vaughn et al., 2006). For instance, scaffolding may include reference to English language learners' primary languages or cultures. In this example, teachers may use relevant cognates while teaching English language development or provide primary language explanations to support English comprehension (Carlo et al., 2004).

Culturally responsive research further demonstrates the effectiveness of this strategy in facilitating students' success and self-esteem during teaching episodes (Garza, 2009). Students have reported that teachers who provide this level of specialized assistance welcome a variety of student discourse and show genuine interest in their students' successes (McIntyre & Hulan, 2013).





---

## **Recommended Culturally Responsive Teaching Approaches and Considerations**

In addition to the instructional practices previously described and supported by emerging research, the existing literature base describing CRT encourages other approaches that may have the potential for enhancing diverse student-learning outcomes. As previously stated, current empirical research with diverse populations investigating the effectiveness of these practices in conjunction with examining its effects on student outcomes is lacking. Teachers, however, are encouraged to consider these areas of instruction supported by this literature base with diverse students. Specifically, these include using a problem-solving approach and child-centered practices during instruction and making special considerations during the assessment of CLD students and the selection of instructional materials that support students' cultural and linguistic experiences.

### **Problem-Solving Approach**

Problem solving requires teachers to create opportunities for students to investigate real, open-ended problems; formulate questions; and develop solutions to genuine challenging situations. Engaging students in solving meaningful problems allows for complex and higher order thinking while increasing students' motivation to learn and resolve authentic issues in their daily lives. Teachers create opportunities for students to critique, challenge, and transform examples of injustice or inequity in their daily lives and communities (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Therefore, problem solving becomes culturally responsive when students address problems that touch upon cultural and linguistic issues for the purpose of improving their daily lives. Some examples may include gathering and critiquing additional sources to supplement textbook curriculum to better reflect students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, investigating colleges with supportive programs for diverse students, and collecting oral histories from community elders regarding topics of study.



---

This instructional approach not only identifies and challenges de facto community inequities that may exist, but also allows students to devise solutions toward meaningful change. For example, one teacher engaged her students in investigating zoning laws using math and reading skills in order to reduce the number of liquor stores and their associated problems (i.e., drug trafficking, prostitution, and public intoxication) around a school's campus (Tate, 1995). With the results of their research, students lobbied the state Senate and made formal presentations to the city council, which resulted in numerous citations and the closure of two liquor stores near the school. Culturally responsive problem solving encourages students to care about their communities. Literature documenting the implementation of culturally responsive problem solving with diverse populations is emerging.

### **Child-Centered Instruction**

Students' contributions drive the teaching and learning process in a culturally responsive classroom as teachers develop culturally responsive learning opportunities and outcomes focused on student-generated ideas, background knowledge, values, communication styles, and preferences. Through student-oriented practices, teachers respond to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and learning needs. Student-centered instruction, choice, and participation are central to CRT practices (Kea, Campbell-Whatley, & Richards, 2006).

Research conducted with indigenous groups and later adopted for use with a variety of other diverse student populations has long established child-directed activities as essential to the instruction of CLD learners (Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence [CREDE], 2013). Researchers studying American Indian educational systems and communities found that given that these children are "allowed a high level of autonomy and decision making in their homes and communities, Indian students may be more comfortable and more motivated



---

to participate in activities that they generate, organize, or direct themselves” (Hilberg, Tharp, & DeGeest, 2000, p. 33). This practice is true for many diverse communities.

In culturally responsive classrooms, teachers provide opportunities for choice in classroom activities, encourage child-directed learning, and assist students as they engage in these activities. Teachers create opportunities for students to make decisions regarding the content and form of instruction and support that students need to self-regulate their learning. Instructional Conversation (Saunders, 1999; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999), an example of a child-centered practice, focuses on facilitating student dialogue in which students engage in conversations about academic content while establishing connections to personal, cultural, family, and community knowledge. Research support for these practices is emerging; for example, the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) found Instructional Conversations and Literature Logs to demonstrate the promising effects on reading achievement and English language development in English language learners (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

### **Assessments**

While assessing diverse students, teachers should select informal measures and assessment procedures and formal (i.e., standardized) assessments that consider students’ linguistic and cultural identities. Selected assessment tools and procedures should be designed for the purpose of uncovering what students already know and understand in order for teachers and families to capitalize on students’ strengths (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2006). While interpreting assessment results, teachers must recognize that norms regarding expected student performance may vary depending on students’ cultural backgrounds and experiences. Research shows that school personnel often ignore this variation or view differences as examples of deviance in need of correction (Klingner et al., 2005).

---

Inappropriate instruction, referral, and assessment procedures with diverse populations have been indicated a key contributors to the overrepresentation of CLD students in special education programs (Klingner et al., 2005; Linan-Thompson & Ortiz, 2009; Ortiz & Artiles, 2010; Ortiz & Yates, 2002). However, the examination of these practices within culturally responsive research is extremely limited. Recommendations related to culturally responsive assessment practices call for teachers to select measures and procedures validated for the population being assessed, recognize the influence of classroom instruction and the potential for teacher bias, integrate multiple ongoing performance assessments, tap into students' strengths, involve qualified and trained representatives from students' cultural groups and communities in assessment procedures and recommendations, integrate appropriate ongoing curriculum-based assessments, and recognize that learning is demonstrated by a continuum of performance rather than by discrete skills displayed at designated points in time (Gay, 2013; Klingner et al., 2005).

## **Materials**

CRT requires teachers to integrate research-developed and teacher-selected materials that validate and consider students' cultural, linguistic, and racial identities. As critical consumers of these resources, teachers and students should review this material for the appropriate reflection of the diversity represented within the classroom community. When representative diversity is absent from this material, teachers should supplement as necessary to provide resources that reflect the cultures, languages, and lived experiences of the students they support (Banks, 2004; Gay, 2010, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Research on the content of texts and other instructional materials shows that many materials provide poor, inaccurate, and absent representation of diverse cultural and linguistic groups (Gay, 2010). Integrating materials reflective of students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds is a strategy implemented within research examining CRT practices. In order to

---

more directly address the inadequacies of curricular material for diverse students, Gay (2013) outlined the following explicit strategies in which teachers and students should engage:

- conducting analyses of textbooks, mass media, Internet, literary sources, and personal narratives;
- exploring how personal backgrounds and environmental factors influence authors' scholarship;
- examining multiple ethnic descriptions and interpretations of events and experiences;
- investigating how different knowledge sources affect teaching and learning; and
- reconstructing or replacing existing presentations of issues and situations in the various resources with their own acquired cultural knowledge and insights (p. 59).

These practices allow teachers and students to critically evaluate the materials and resources used to guide instruction, correct any misrepresentation, and validate diverse students' histories and lived experiences.

Overall, the literature base describing CRT highlights problem-solving and child-centered approaches as representative of a culturally responsive classroom. Teachers who carefully select and critique the assessments and materials used for evaluation and instruction do so with their students' cultural and linguistic needs in mind. Although highly recommended, these CRT approaches and considerations require further empirical study with diverse populations for a better understanding of their influence on student achievement.

### **Conclusion**

Overall, rigorous empirical research examining the effectiveness of CRT on the academic achievement of diverse learners in K-12 settings is severely lacking. Despite the dearth of studies in this area, available research to date provides the field with emerging practices and

---

other relevant approaches and instructional considerations. Many educational professionals may conclude that the practices outlined in this review encompass examples of “just good teaching” (Au, 2009). This way of thinking, however, presumes a generic universality of what is considered good teaching practice while ignoring the understanding that teaching and learning are culturally situated, varying across and within cultural and linguistic groups (Gay, 2010). While implementing these practices, teachers must consciously make connections to students’ cultures, languages, and everyday experiences in order for students to experience academic achievement while preserving their cultural and linguistic identities. “Academic success and cultural identity can and must be simultaneously achieved, not presented as dichotomous choices” (Klingner et al., 2005, p. 23). To ensure the academic achievement of diverse learners in urban, rural, and suburban communities across the United States, institutions of higher education and school districts must provide a rigorous continuum of ongoing PD to support beginning and experienced teachers in their understanding and implementation of culturally responsive teaching practices.

---

## References

- Aceves, T. C., Banks, T., Han, I., Rao, K., Diliberto, J., & Shepherd, K. (2014). *Increasing the involvement of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education research*. Arlington, VA: Division for Research of the Council for Exceptional Children.
- Anyon, J. (2005). *Radical possibilities*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Arce, J. (2004). Latino bilingual teachers: The struggle to sustain an emancipatory pedagogy in public schools. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 17(2), 227-246. doi:10.1080/09518390310001653880
- Au, K. (2005). *Multicultural issues and literacy achievement*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Au, K. (2009). Isn't culturally responsive instruction just good teaching? *Social Education*, 73(4), 279-183.
- Au, K. (2011). *Literacy achievement and diversity*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Aud, S., Hussar, F., Johnson, G., Kena, G., & Roth, E. (2013). *The condition of education 2013* (NCES 2013-037). Retrieved from U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics website: <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2013/2013037.pdf>
- August, D., & Hakuta, K. (1997). *Improving schooling for language-minority children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.
- August, D., & Shanahan, T. (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Banks, J. (2004). *Handbook of research on multicultural education*. New York, NY: MacMillan.
- Cahnmann, M. (2005). Translating competence in a critical bilingual classroom. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 36(3), 230-249. doi:10.1525/aeq.2005.36.3.230



- 
- Cahnmann, M. S., & Remillard, J. T. (2002). What counts and how: Mathematics teaching in culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse urban settings. *Urban Review*, 34(3), 179-204.
- Calhoon, M. B., Al Otaiba, S., Greenberg, D., King, A., & Avalos, A. (2006). Improving reading skills in predominantly Hispanic Title 1 first-grade classrooms: The promise of peer-assisted learning strategies. *Learning Disabilities Research and Practice*, 21, 261-272. doi:10.1111/j.1540-5826.2006.00222.x
- Carlo, M. S., August, D., McLaughlin, B., Snow, C. E., Dressler, C., Lippman, D. N., . . . White, C. E. (2004). Closing the gap: Addressing the vocabulary needs of English-language learners in bilingual and mainstream classrooms. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 39(2), 188-215. doi:10.1598/RRQ.39.2.3
- Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE). (2013). Standards: Development of CREDE standards. Retrieved from [http://manoa.hawaii.edu/coe/crede/?page\\_id=2](http://manoa.hawaii.edu/coe/crede/?page_id=2)
- Cochran-Smith, M. (2004). Defining the outcomes of teacher education: What's social justice got to do with it? *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 32(3), 193-212.
- Cummins, J. (2007). Pedagogies for the poor? Realigning reading instruction for low-income students with scientifically based reading research. *Educational Research*, 36(9), 564-572. doi:10.3102/0013189X07313156
- Diaz-Rico, L. T., & Weed, K. Z. (2006). *The crosscultural, language, and academic development handbook: A complete K-12 reference guide* (4th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.





- 
- Fuchs, L. S., & Vaughn, S. (2012). Responsiveness-to-intervention: A decade later. *Journal of Learning Disabilities, 45*(3), 195-203. doi:10.1177/0022219412442150
- Garza, R. (2009). Latino and White high school students' perceptions of caring behaviors: Are we culturally responsive to our students? *Urban Education, 44*(3), 297-321.  
doi:10.1177/0042085908318714
- Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (2013). Teaching to and through cultural diversity. *Curriculum Inquiry, 43*(1), 48-70.  
doi:10.1111/curi.12002
- Genesee, F., & Riches, C. (2006). Instructional issues in literacy development. In F. Genesee, K. Lindholm-Leary, W. Saunders, & D. Christian (Eds.), *Educating English language learners: A synthesis of research evidence* (pp. 109-175). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Gerber, M., Jiménez, T., Leafstedt, J., Villaruz, J., Richards, C., & English, J. (2004). English reading effects of small-group intensive intervention in Spanish for K-1 English learners. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice, 19*(4), 239-251.  
doi:10.1111/j.15405826.2004.00109.x
- Gersten, R., & Geva, E. (2003). Teaching reading to early language learners. *Educational Leadership, 60*, 44-49.
- Gipe, J. P. (2006). *Multiple paths to literacy: Assessment and differentiated instruction for diverse learners*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Goldenberg, C. (2013). Unlocking the research for English learners. *American Educator, 37*(2), 4-11.



- 
- González, N., Moll, L. C., & Amanti, C. (Eds.). (2013). *Funds of knowledge: Theorizing practices in households, communities, and classrooms*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hall, G. E., & Hord, S. M. (1987). *Change in schools: Facilitating the process*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Hall, G. E., & Hord, S. M. (2001). *Implementing change: Patterns, principles, and potholes*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Hall, G. E., Loucks, S. F., Rutherford, W. L., & Newton, B. W. (1975). Levels of use of the innovation: A framework for analyzing innovation adoption. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 26, 52-56.
- Harlin, R., & Souto-Manning, M. (2009). Review of research: Educating Latino children: International perspectives and values in early education. *Childhood Education*, 85(3), 182-186. doi:10.1080/00094056.2009.10521388
- Harry, B., & Klingner, J. K. (2006). *Why are so many minority students in special education? Understanding race and disability in schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hersi, A. A., & Watkinson, J. S. (2012). Supporting immigrant students in a newcomer high school: A case study. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 35(1), 98-111. doi:10.1080/15235882.2012.668869
- Hilberg, R. S., Tharp, R. G., & DeGeest, L. (2000). The efficacy of CREDE's standards-based instruction in American Indian mathematics classes. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 33(2), 32-40. doi:10.1080/1066568000330206
- Hord, S. M., Rutherford, W. L., Huling-Austin, L. & Hall, G. E. (1987). *Taking charge of change*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.



- 
- Irvine, J. J. (2002). *In search of wholeness: African American teachers and their culturally specific classroom practices*. New York, NY: Palgrave/St. Martin's Press.
- Irvine, J. J., & Armento, B. J. (2001). *Culturally responsive teaching: Lesson planning for elementary and middle grades*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Jiménez, R. T., & Gersten, R. (1999). Lessons and dilemmas derived from the literacy instruction of two Latina/o teachers. *American Educational Research Journal*, 36(2), 265-301. doi:10.3102/00028312036002265
- Kamps, D., Abbott, M., Greenwood, C., Arreaga-Mayer, C., Wills, H., Longstaff, J., . . . Walton, C. (2007). Use of evidence-based, small-group reading instruction for English language learners in elementary grades: Secondary-tier intervention. *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 30(3), 153-168. doi:10.2307/30035561
- Kea, C., Campbell-Whatley, G. D., & Richards, H. V. (2006). *Becoming culturally responsive educators: Rethinking teacher education pedagogy (practitioner brief series)*. Tempe, AZ: National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems.
- Klingner, J. K., Artiles, A. J., Kozleski, E., Harry, B., Zion, S., Tate, W., . . . Riley, D. (2005). Addressing the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education through culturally responsive educational systems. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 13(38), 1-39.
- Klingner, J. K., & Vaughn, S. (1996). Reciprocal teaching of reading comprehension strategies for students with learning disabilities who use English as a second language. *Elementary School Journal*, 96, 275-293. doi:10.1086/461828

- 
- Klingner, J. K., & Vaughn, S. (1999). Promoting reading comprehension, content learning, and English acquisition through Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR). *The Reading Teacher*, 52, 738-747.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teaching for African American students*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2009). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American students*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Linan-Thompson, S., & Ortiz, A. A. (2009). Response to intervention and English-language learners: Instructional and assessment considerations. *Seminars in Speech and Language*, 30, 105-120. doi:10.1055/s-0029-1215718
- Lipka, J., Hogan, M. P., Webster, J. P., Yanez, E., Adams, B., Clark, S., & Lacy, D. (2005). Math in a cultural context: Two case studies of a successful culturally based math project. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 36(4), 367-385. doi:10.1525/aeq.2005.36.4.367
- McIntyre, E., & Hulan, N. (2013). Research-based, culturally responsive reading practice in elementary classrooms: A yearlong study. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 52(1), 28-51. doi:10.1080/19388071.2012.737409
- Mitchell, A. (1998). African American teachers: Unique roles and universal lessons. *Education and Urban Society*, 31(1), 104-122. doi:10.1177/0013124598031001008
- Nieto, S., & Bode, P. (2012). School reform and student learning: A multicultural perspective. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (8th ed., pp. 395-415). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley & Sons.



- 
- Nieto, S., Bode, P., Kang, E., & Raible, J. (2008). Identity, community, and diversity: Retheorizing multicultural curriculum for the postmodern era. In F. Connelly, M. He, & J. Phillion (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of curriculum and instruction* (pp. 176-198). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- O'Connor, R. E., & Vadasy, P. F. (2011). *Handbook of reading interventions*. New York, NY: Guilford.
- Orosco, M. J. (2010). Sociocultural considerations when using RtI with English language learners. *Theory Into Practice*, 49(4), 265-272.
- Orosco, M. J., & Klingner, J. (2010). One school's implementation of RTI with English language learners: "Referring into RTI." *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, 43(3), 269-288.  
doi:10.1177/0022219409355474
- Orosco, M. J., & O'Connor, R. E. (2011). Cultural aspects of teaching reading with Latino English language learners. In R. E. O'Connor & P. F. Vadasy (Eds.), *Handbook of reading interventions* (pp. 356-379). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Orosco, M. J., & O'Connor, R. (2013). Culturally responsive instruction for English language learners with learning disabilities. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1177/0022219413476553
- Ortiz, A., & Artiles, A. J. (2010). Meeting the needs of English language learners with disabilities: A linguistically and culturally responsive model. In G. Li & P. Edwards (Eds.), *Best practices in ELL instruction* (pp. 247-272). New York, NY: Guilford.

- 
- Ortiz, A., & Yates, J. R. (2002). Considerations in the assessment of English language learners with disabilities. In A. J. Artiles & A. Ortiz (Eds.), *Identification and instruction of English language learners with special needs* (pp. 65-85). Washington DC: Center for Applied Linguistics.
- Pinker, S. (2002). *The blank slate: The modern denial of human nature*. New York, NY: Penguin Group.
- Richards, H. V., Brown, A. F., & Forde, T. B. (2006). *Addressing diversity in schools: Culturally responsive pedagogy (practitioner brief series)*. Tempe, AZ: National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems.
- Roy, P., & Hord, S. M. (2004). Innovation configurations chart a measured course toward change. *Journal of Staff Development*, 25(2), 54-58.
- Sáenz, L. M., Fuchs, L. S., & Fuchs, D. (2005). Peer-assisted learning strategies for English language learners with learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 71, 231-247.
- Santamaria, L. J. (2009). Culturally responsive differentiated instruction: Narrowing gaps between best pedagogical practices benefiting all learners. *The Teachers College Record*, 111(1), 214-247.
- Saunders, W. M. (1999). Improving literacy achievement for English learners in transitional bilingual programs. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 5(4), 345-381.  
doi:10.1076/edre.5.4.345.6936
- Saunders, W. M., & Goldenberg, C. (1999). Effects of instructional conversations and literature logs on limited- and fluent-English-proficient students' story comprehension and thematic understanding. *Elementary School Journal*, 99(4), 277-301.

- 
- Scheurich, J. J. (1998). Highly successful and loving, public elementary schools populated mainly by low-SES children of color: Core beliefs and cultural characteristics. *Urban Education, 33*(4), 451-491. doi:10.1177/0042085998033004001
- Skiba, R. J., Horner, R. H., Chung, C. G., Karega Rausch, M., May, S. L., & Tobin, T. (2011). Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review, 40*(1), 85.
- Tate, W. (1995). Returning to the root: A culturally relevant approach to mathematics pedagogy. *Theory Into Practice, 34*(3), 166-173. doi:10.1080/00405849509543676
- Tomasello, M. (1999). *The cultural origins of cognition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- U.S. Department of Education. (2006). *What Works Clearinghouse intervention report: Instructional conversations and literature logs*. Retrieved from [http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/intervention\\_reports/WWC\\_ICLL\\_102606.pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/intervention_reports/WWC_ICLL_102606.pdf)
- U.S. Department of Education. (2013). Number and percentage distribution of teachers in public and private elementary and secondary schools, by selected teacher characteristics: Selected years, 1987-88 through 2011-12. Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics website: [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13\\_209.10.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_209.10.asp)
- U.S. Department of Education. (2014). State nonfiscal public elementary/secondary education survey data. Retrieved from National Center for Education Statistics website: <http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/stnfnis.asp>



---

Vaughn, S., Klingner, J. K., Swanson, E. A., Boardman, A. G., Roberts, G., Mohammed, S. S., & Stillman-Spisak, S. J. (2011). Efficacy of collaborative strategic reading with middle school students. *American Educational Research Journal*, 48, 938-964.

doi:10.3102/0002831211410305

Vaughn, S., Mathes, P., Linan-Thompson, S., Cirino, P., Carlson, C., Pollard-Durodola, S., . . . Francis, D. (2006). Effectiveness of an English intervention for first-grade English language learners at risk for reading problems. *The Elementary School Journal*, 107(2), 153-180. doi:10.1086/510653





## Appendix

### Culturally Responsive Teaching Innovation Configuration

Essential Components	Implementation Levels					Rating
Instructions: Place an X under the appropriate variation implementation score for each course syllabus that meets the criteria level from 0 to 3. Score and rate each item separately.	<b>Level 0</b> There is no evidence that the component is included in the syllabus, or the syllabus only mentions the component.	<b>Level 1</b> Must contain at least one of the following: reading, test, lecture/presentation, discussion, modeling/demonstration, or quiz.	<b>Level 2</b> Must contain at least one item from Level 1, plus at least one of the following: observation, project/activity, case study, or lesson plan study.	<b>Level 3</b> Must contain at least one item from Level 1 as well as at least one item from Level 2, plus at least one of the following: tutoring, small group student teaching, or whole group internship.		Rate each item as the number of the highest variation receiving an X under it.
<b>1.0 Multicultural Awareness</b>						
1.1 - Educate students regarding the culture of others while emphasizing sensitivity and respect.						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Commonalities</li> <li>Differences</li> </ul>						
<b>2.0 Critical Thinking</b>						
2.1 - Teach explicit strategies.						
2.2 - Apply logic to new or unfamiliar ideas and concepts.						
<b>3.0 Social Justice</b>						
3.1 - Assist students to become socially and politically conscious.						



Essential Components	Implementation Levels					Rating
	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3		
<p>Instructions: Place an X under the appropriate variation implementation score for each course syllabus that meets the criteria level from 0 to 3. Score and rate each item separately.</p>	There is no evidence that the component is included in the syllabus, or the syllabus only mentions the component.	Must contain at least one of the following: reading, test, lecture/presentation, discussion, modeling/demonstration, or quiz.	Must contain at least one item from Level 1, plus at least one of the following: observation, project/activity, case study, or lesson plan study.	Must contain at least one item from Level 1 as well as at least one item from Level 2, plus at least one of the following: tutoring, small group student teaching, or whole group internship.		Rate each item as the number of the highest variation receiving an X under it.
<b>4.0 Problem-Solving Approach</b>						
4.1 - Create opportunities for students to investigate.						
4.2 - Allow students to formulate questions and develop solutions.						
<b>5.0 Culture, Language, and Racial Identity</b>						
5.1 - Implement educational practices that connect to and reflect the following:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Language</li> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Values</li> <li>• Customs</li> <li>• Daily lives</li> <li>• Beliefs</li> </ul>						



Essential Components		Implementation Levels				
Instructions: Place an X under the appropriate variation implementation score for each course syllabus that meets the criteria level from 0 to 3. Score and rate each item separately.	Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Rating	
	There is no evidence that the component is included in the syllabus, or the syllabus only mentions the component.	Must contain at least one of the following: reading, test, lecture/presentation, discussion, modeling/demonstration, or quiz.	Must contain at least one item from Level 1, plus at least one of the following: observation, project/activity, case study, or lesson plan study.	Must contain at least one item from Level 1 as well as at least one item from Level 2, plus at least one of the following: tutoring, small group student teaching, or whole group internship.	Rate each item as the number of the highest variation receiving an X under it.	
6.0 Child-Centered Instruction						
6.1 - Develop culturally responsive learning opportunities and outcomes focused on student-generated ideas, values, and preferences.						
7.0 Collaborative Teaching						
7.1 - Motivate teamwork and resource sharing among the following:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students</li><li>• Teachers</li><li>• Across teachers, school, and home</li></ul>						
8.0 Instructional Engagement						
8.1 - Motivate students to become engaged, responsive, and active learners.						



Essential Components		Implementation Levels				
		Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Rating
Instructions: Place an X under the appropriate variation implementation score for each course syllabus that meets the criteria level from 0 to 3. Score and rate each item separately.		There is no evidence that the component is included in the syllabus, or the syllabus only mentions the component.	Must contain at least one of the following: reading, test, lecture/presentation, discussion, modeling/demonstration, or quiz.	Must contain at least one item from Level 1, plus at least one of the following: observation, project/activity, case study, or lesson plan study.	Must contain at least one item from Level 1 as well as at least one item from Level 2, plus at least one of the following: tutoring, small group student teaching, or whole group internship.	Rate each item as the number of the highest variation receiving an X under it.
<b>9.0 Instructional Scaffolding</b>						
9.1 - Control for task difficulty.						
9.2 - Promote a deeper level of understanding using students' contributions and linguistic backgrounds.						
<b>10.0 Modeling</b>						
10.1 - Exemplify learning outcomes of culturally responsive teaching.						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy use</li> <li>• Content learning</li> <li>• Metacognitive/critical thinking</li> <li>• Interest and respect for values of culturally responsive teaching/learning</li> </ul>						
<b>11.0 Materials</b>						
11.1 - Integrate research-developed and/or teacher developed/selected materials and resources that validate and consider students' cultural, linguistic, and racial identities.						



Essential Components		Implementation Levels				
		Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Rating
Instructions: Place an X under the appropriate variation implementation score for each course syllabus that meets the criteria level from 0 to 3. Score and rate each item separately.		There is no evidence that the component is included in the syllabus, or the syllabus only mentions the component.	Must contain at least one of the following: reading, test, lecture/presentation, discussion, modeling/demonstration, or quiz.	Must contain at least one item from Level 1, plus at least one of the following: observation, project/activity, case study, or lesson plan study.	Must contain at least one item from Level 1 as well as at least one item from Level 2, plus at least one of the following: tutoring, small group student teaching, or whole group internship.	Rate each item as the number of the highest variation receiving an X under it.
<b>12.0 Responsive Feedback</b>						
12.1 - Provide critical, ongoing, and immediate feedback regarding students' responses and participation.						
<b>13.0 Assessments</b>						
13.1 - Select formal (i.e. standardized) and informal assessments that validate and consider students' linguistic and cultural identities.						
<b>14.0 High Expectations</b>						
14.1 - Challenge students to strive for excellence and reach levels of expectations and standards.						

