

# Preface

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**C***ulturally Responsive Standards-Based Teaching: Classroom to Community and Back* describes how educators can use the knowledge and culture students bring to school in a standards-based curriculum that supports student success. We call this approach culturally responsive standards-based (CRSB) teaching. Unlike multicultural education—which is an important way to incorporate all the world’s cultural and ethnic diversity into lessons—CRSB teaching draws on the experiences, understandings, views, concepts, and ways of knowing of the students in the classroom.

Through foundational research and snapshots of real-life classroom practices throughout the United States, this publication shows teachers and school leaders how CRSB

- engages all students in learning,
- builds relationships between the classroom and the outside world, and
- creates opportunities for families and community members to support student success in and out of school.

This resource guide also offers tools, resources, and references to help practitioners adapt and apply CRSB teaching in their own school environment. By using this material, the guide seeks to help teachers

- expand their understanding of their own culture, the students’ cultures, and the ways culture affects teaching and learning; and
- develop strategies for incorporating these cultures into a rigorous, challenging, and effective curriculum that will enable students to meet state and local standards.

The guide does not write the CRSB curriculum. Instead, it forms a rich, fertile ground on which educators may create lessons that are unique (and responsive) to themselves and their students.

## WHY THIS BOOK IS NEEDED

Across the nation, our schools are growing increasingly more diverse: culturally, economically, and linguistically. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) reveals in its latest report on the Condition of Education that in 2007 forty-four percent

of public school students were part of a racial or ethnic minority group, largely due to growth in the proportion of Latino students; 10.8 million school-age children spoke a language other than English at home, with Spanish being the most frequently spoken; and 46 percent of all fourth-graders were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (Planty et al., 2009a, 2009b).

While these changes to the student population have been happening across the country, the distribution has differed greatly across regions. In 2007, for instance, the West was the only region where minority public school enrollment (57 percent) exceeded white enrollment (43 percent). One-third of all students in the West (33.5 percent) spoke a language other than English at home.

With these changes come additional challenges to schools. According to an earlier NCES report (Wirt et al., 2005), the percentage of children whose families had more risk factors (defined as living in poverty, non-English primary home language, mother's low educational level, or single-parent household) were less likely to have mastered more-complex reading and mathematics skills by Grade 3 than were children from families with fewer risk factors. In grades 4 and 8, white and Asian/Pacific Islander students had higher average scores than did Native American, Latino, or black students in both reading and math, with the level of poverty in the school negatively associated with student achievement in both grades. In addition, language minority youth lagged behind their counterparts who spoke only English at home on most education (and economic) indicators, including school enrollment, grade retention, high school completion, postsecondary enrollment, and highest educational level attained—with those speaking Spanish faring less well than those speaking other non-English languages.

A number of studies suggest low school performance might be linked, in part, to the lack of congruence between the cultures of the students' families and communities and the cultural norms embedded in the expectations, policies, procedures, and practices of schools (Bensman, 1999; Bowman & Stott, 1994; Cummins, 1986; Delpit, 1995; Entwistle, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995). In addition, a recent examination of 80 research studies and literature reviews (Henderson & Mapp, 2002) found a positive and convincing relationship between family involvement and benefits for students, including improved academic achievement, higher grade point averages and scores on standardized tests, enrollment in courses that are more challenging, more classes passed and credits earned, better attendance, improved behavior both at home and at school, and better social skills and adaptation to school—holding across families of all economic, racial or ethnic, and educational backgrounds, and for students of all ages.

In a report to the U.S. Department of Education, the Regional Advisory Committee for the Northwest stated that the overriding regional challenge is to close the achievement gap between white students and students of other cultural and racial groups. When considering the achievement issues, specific challenges were identified that included addressing language, culture, and diversity among students and developing strategies to engage the community, especially families, in effective and meaningful ways (Northwest Regional Advisory Committee, 2005).

One of the most powerful ways to strengthen family and community partnerships for successful student learning is to change instructional and curricular practices so they are more culturally responsive. Drawing on the knowledge, skills, and experiences of students and the support of family and community members enriches the curriculum and builds family and community support, broadening learning experiences for all students.

## DESIGN AND APPLICATIONS

The format of this publication and the materials contained in it were designed with the help of a cadre of users. Teachers, administrators, youth workers, curriculum coordinators, in-service trainers, and professors at colleges of education field-tested this guide. Some used it as a stand-alone document to support their teaching practices, and some used it with a variety of professional development supports, including one-to-one facilitation, technical assistance within professional learning teams, and group professional development either on site or through an online course. These field-testers and reviewers provided invaluable feedback that has shaped the development of these materials. They also helped in designing several options for the guide's intended use as a professional development tool and as a resource to support teaching practices.

The vast majority of the educators who contributed to the ideas in this publication, particularly those highlighted in the snapshots, are from the Pacific Northwest. This is because the first edition of the book was developed with funds from the U.S. Department of Education provided to the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (now Education Northwest) for work specifically within a five-state region: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. However, we strongly believe that most of the ideas in these snapshots are generalizable across diverse contexts and locations. Although a school in rural Alaska may seem to have nothing in common with an inner-city school in Baltimore, they actually have a number of remarkable similarities: high dropout rates, many disenfranchised minority youth, most of the teachers from a culture other than the students', difficulty recruiting and maintaining highly qualified teachers and administrators, pressure from the state and the district to improve test scores, facilities in need of improvement, service to low-income communities with high substance-abuse rates and inadequate social supports, and, most important, great potential to harness the strengths and culture of the students for their academic and life success.

*Culturally Responsive Standards-Based Teaching: Classroom to Community and Back* is intended for use by K–12 teachers, youth workers, curriculum coordinators and developers, principals, administrators, preservice teachers, and instructors at colleges of education. It can be used in professional development trainings or as a resource for individual teachers in the classrooms. CRSB teaching is an approach that asks educators to engage in a process of continual reflection and improvement. As such, this guide is organized to take the educator through the steps of such a process, with each chapter building on those before it. The reader is encouraged to tailor the concepts and tools to his or her specific role, setting, students, families, and community. Tools and examples (“snapshots”) are formatted differently and listed in the table of contents so they can be found easily. Because effective reflection begins with authentic inquiry, many of the tools contain thought-provoking, open-ended questions.