



NTACT
National Technical Assistance Center on Transition

Culturally Responsive (Sustaining) Practices for Students with and At Risk for Disabilities Annotated Bibliography

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What are Culturally Responsive (Sustaining) Practices?

Within the context of education, the integration of culturally responsive/sustaining practices is intended to cultivate and sustain an equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students; especially those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds and students with and at risk for disabilities. Attempts to incorporate culturally responsive/sustaining practices within the classroom are a result of continuous efforts to address educational inequities that have historically limited access to a high quality education for marginalized students and students with disabilities. These systemic barriers have fueled and perpetuated a cultural dissonance between academic content (school) and real-world experiences (home) that is often associated with high rates of suspension, grade retention, racially disproportionate special education placement, and school dropout (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Irvine, 1990).

To act as a buffer against these negative school outcomes, the application of culturally responsive/sustaining practices utilizes a critical pedagogical approach to teaching and learning. Positioned from within an assets-based framework, culturally responsive/sustaining practices identify students' cultural knowledge, voice, prior experiences, and diverse learning styles and recognizes them as resources, rather than deficits, to increase student engagement and provide more meaningful instruction (Paris & Alim, 2017; Gay, 2000).

Why is Culturally Responsive (Sustaining) Practices important in Transition Planning?

As schools become increasingly diverse, educators search for instructional strategies that attempt to align the curriculum with students' cultures and lived experiences for more effective teaching (Banks & Banks, 2001). CLD students with and at risk for disabilities benefit academically when a balance between engaging in culturally responsive/sustaining practices and teaching within a climate of accountability is achieved.

What does the literature say about Culturally Responsive (Sustaining) Practices in Transition Planning?

A plethora of studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of integrating culturally responsive/sustaining practices. Generally, scholars made the following conclusions:

- Teachers are perceived to be more effective when they integrate culturally responsive/ sustaining practices within their classrooms (Nieto, 2003);
- Culturally responsive/sustaining practices are a means to achieving educational equity (Gay, 2000);
- The use of culturally responsive/sustaining practices helps reduce the overrepresentation of CLD students in special education, mitigate the achievement gap, and improve student outcomes (Klinger et al., 2005); and
- Culturally responsive/sustaining practices work best when coupled with critical teacher reflection (Howard, 2003).

The purpose of this annotated bibliography is to synthesize relevant research and resources on the effective integration of culturally responsive/sustaining practices in special education. The strategies and interventions that have produced positive academic outcomes for CLD students with and at risk for disabilities are briefly summarized. To conclude, additional resources on culturally responsive/sustaining practices are provided.

References

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Cartledge, G., & Kourea, L. (2008). Culturally responsive classrooms for culturally diverse students with and at risk for disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 74*, 351-371.

- The aim of this article is to present effective strategies for creating culturally responsive classrooms for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) students with disabilities (e.g., African Americans, Hispanics, and Native American students).
- The article discusses cultural dissonance as a factor for deficit educational outcomes and the implications for educators.
- Practices are provided to develop culturally responsive classrooms, first, by understanding the cultural competence of teachers. Culturally competent teachers understand the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students and realize that student actions and verbiage may differ from mainstream contexts. Students should not be punished or judged unfairly. The authors provide examples for teacher self-reflection through a series of questions. Examples include, “How often do I send the same students for disciplinary actions?” and “What messages am I communicating to the students who are the recipients of these actions?” Second, culturally responsive classrooms engage students in effective and relevant instruction.
- A model for effective instruction is highlighted providing Tier I, whole classroom instruction, and Tier II, small group instruction examples.
- The argument is laid out describing instructional pacing, prompt feedback, consistent instructional monitoring and the benefits of building community for teachers, students, and tutors.
- Lastly, the article lists strategies for creating culturally responsive and disciplined classrooms through behavior management. Examples include evidenced based proactive systems of social skills building and individual behavior interventions.
- The authors discuss the implications based on empirical evidence that culturally responsive classroom create safe, nurturing, and productive classrooms for CLD students with disabilities.

Chiu, C.L., Carrero, K.M., & Lusk, M.E. (2017). Culturally responsive writing instruction for secondary students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Beyond Behavior, 26*, 28-35.

- This article presents specific strategies for infusing culturally responsive instruction (CRI) into scaffolded practices for teaching written expression to youth with emotional and behavioral disorders (EBD).
- The aim of this article is to provide practices to deliver CRI to students who come from culturally, linguistically, or socioeconomically different backgrounds. Students with exceptionalities can be characterized as diverse in several ways, such as intellectual abilities, gender, language, religion, race, sexual orientation, and age.

- English Language Arts teachers in secondary settings can benefit from the resources in this article such as websites for teaching tolerance along with suggested resources for implementing culturally responsive writing instruction.
- Strategies include examples of **Dos** and **Don'ts** of CRI such as **Do** “teach the skill of code switching for different audiences” and **Don't** “...assign writing topics which have no relevance to your students.”
- Other resources highlighted are sample student self-evaluation checklists for prewriting and tips for drafting, editing, and revising essays.
- The outcomes of utilizing CRI with EBD students can increase student achievement, on-task behavior, and provide opportunities for self-advocacy which in turn will positively affect dropout and graduation rates.

Collins, T. A., Hawkins, R. O., Flowers, E. M., Kalra, H. D., Richard, J., & Haas, L. E. (2018). Behavior bingo: The effects of a culturally relevant group contingency intervention for students with EBD. *Psychology in the Schools, 55*, 63-75.

- This study evaluated the effectiveness of Behavior Bingo, an interdependent group contingency intervention on academic engagement, off-task behavior, and disruptive behavior of students with emotional and behavior disorders (EBD).
- An ABAB withdrawal design was used showing Behavior Bingo had promise as a feasible and effective classroom management intervention. On-task, appropriate behavior led to increased academic achievement, decreased behavior referrals, and increased student collaboration.
- The intervention utilized a BINGO board which aided the students in behavior recognition and consequence/reward outcomes. Students helped design the slips for the BINGO game as a class-wide preference exercise to name appropriate behaviors and reinforcers such as candy, free time, and pencils. Slips were designed with numbers 1-25 and a phrase such as “try again” and “student choice.” The teacher set a timer at 5-10-minute intervals and if students were on-task a number was selected for the BINGO board. Reinforcers were provided when the board was horizontally, vertically, or diagonally complete.
- Implications for culturally relevant and responsive intervention are discussed and included in the article focusing on preference assessments and engaging intervention components such as peer mediation utilizing peers of similar age, gender, and race to model culturally responsive behavior, student choice of engagement activities, and implementation of reward systems.

Gay, G. (2002). Culturally responsive teaching in special education for ethnically diverse students: Setting the stage. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15, 613-629.

- The goal of this article is to provide educators with instructional practices and components of culturally responsive teaching as articulated in student cultural perspectives, heritage, and experience.
- The emphasis is on improving educational practices for students in special education and general education settings.
- Components discussed include teacher attitudes and expectations of diversity which are generally based on the standard of the mainstream European-American cultural norms.
- Another component is the discussion of confusing diversity with disability. An illustration is provided on cultural variance related to social and behavioral differences and why these factors may lead to the mislabeling of behavioral and learning disabilities.
- The article stresses the significance of educators being culturally conscious of their own socialization and the affects it has on beliefs and actions toward different ethnic and cultural groups.
- The author offers features and practices for positive impact in classroom climates and communities of learners by utilizing multicultural curriculum and culturally congruent instruction.
- Examples include writing student IEPs for reading comprehension goals with samples of materials written by or about members of a student's own ethnic group.
- Outcomes include opportunities for professional development for teacher self-efficacy and improving quality educational outcomes for diverse students in special education and general education environments.

Fiedler, C. R., Chiang, B., Van Haren, B., Jorgensen, J., Halberg, S., & Boreson, L. (2008). Culturally responsive practices in schools: A checklist to address disproportionality in special education. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40, 52-59.

- This article includes a checklist designed for elementary through high school students to promote a multitiered problem-solving approach.
- Advocates concentrate on early intervening services and identification for special education, focusing on reducing the achievement gap and disproportionate overrepresentation of students with racial, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity (RCELD) in special education.
- According to Fiedler, et al. the areas addressed through the checklist include (1) culturally responsive beliefs and practices of schools and general education classrooms, (2) culturally responsive coordinated early intervening services and referral practices, and (3) culturally responsive IEP team decision making.

- Each section provides guiding questions and quality indicators for educators including specific classroom supports, system wide supports and supplementary support and rubrics for evidence documentation.
- Examples of school culture supports include critical questions and quality indicators such as “Do classrooms contain evidence of contributions and work from students with diverse racial and cultural backgrounds?” and “Does the school establish procedures that emphasize positive behaviors, and regularly recognize students for displaying appropriate behavior?”
- Rubrics are provided to monitor and assess each critical question and the corresponding indicators.
- The evaluation tool provides a step towards culturally responsive practices to help certify that individuals with RCLED in special education are placed in programs only when they truly meet the criteria.

Ramirez, P., Jimenez-Silva, M., Boozer, A., & Clark, B. (2016). Going against the grain in an urban Arizona high school: Secondary preservice teachers emerging as culturally responsive educators, *Multicultural Perspectives, 18*, 20-28.

- This one-year study examined the journey of two preservice urban high-school teachers in Arizona as they model Culturally Responsive Teaching in a year-long student teaching residency.
- Factors that influenced their Culturally Responsive Teaching practices are discussed along with themes that emerged from interviews and classroom observations.
- Recommendations for ways of integrating Culturally Responsive Teaching in teacher education programs for general education and special education are provided such as maintaining a positive view toward students, identifying talents, and affirming individuals.
- Themes include importance of affirming youth, validating student experience, drawing from students’ lived experiences to connect with and empower youth, and providing space and time for reflection and self-determination.
- Teachers’ advocacy, commitment, and willingness to integrate insights are showcased through dialogue snapshots and self-reflection.
- This article is recommended for pre-service teachers and teachers interested and willing to enact culturally responsive teaching in general and special education settings.

Siwatu, K. O., Putman, S. M., Starker-Glass, T. V., & Lewis, C. W. (2017). The culturally responsive classroom management self-efficacy scale: Development and initial validation. *Urban Education, 52*(7), 862-888.

- This article reports on the development and initial validation of the Culturally Responsive Classroom Management Self-Efficacy Scale (CRCMSE). According to Siwatu

et al. evidence of construct validity was obtained with two existing teacher self-efficacy measures.

- Results of the correlational analysis lend credence that the instrument developed by the research team was indeed measuring self-efficacy beliefs.
- Implications for teacher education and research are discussed including classroom practices such as teaching diverse youth to work together, communicating with parents and students, and supporting achievement.
- These best practices can be utilized in general or special education settings.
- Teacher self-efficacy measures can transfer to supportive meaningful relationships with students, parents, and schoolwide personnel. Beliefs influence how teachers respond to and resolve cultural conflicts. Teacher's responses on the CRCMSE will yield a score and provide a self-efficacy strength index.
- This activity and tool will help teachers assess their culturally responsive beliefs and practices.

Waitoller, F.R., & King Thorius, K. A. (2016). Cross-pollinating culturally sustaining pedagogy and universal design for learning: Toward an inclusive pedagogy that accounts for dis/ability. *Harvard Educational Review, 86(3), 366-389.*

- The purpose of this article is to extend the discussion of culturally sustaining pedagogy (CSP) and universal design for learning (UDL) to educators, researchers, and policy makers.
- A platform for eradicating barriers for students with dis/abilities through an inclusive educational agenda of cross-pollination is outlined.
- This framework emerged from the need to address educational inequalities at the intersections of ability, race, language, gender, and class differences. Pedagogies are highlighted which stress the value of cultural diversity and ableism.
- The asset pedagogy of UDL is defined and principles are provided for design and implementation of curriculum goals, such as, multiple means of representation, action, and student engagement.
- Historical context along with four arguments are given for the cross-pollination of UDL and CSP. The authors stress the significance of providing opportunities for individuals to construct fluid cultural identities and to progress through educational pathways without discrimination and oppression.
- An example lesson plan is provided with models of brainstorming and producing arguments for students to be active participants in self-determination and efficacy.
- Outcomes of cross-pollinating CSP and UDL include provisions for students and teachers to actively engage in a variety of pathways for meaningful inquiry of racism and ableism and educators and policy makers to work towards inclusive, equitable, education agendas.

Additional Resources

- Learning Disabilities and Diversity: A Culturally Responsive Approach

Website: <https://www.ldatschool.ca/culturally-responsive-pedagogy/>

- 15 Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies and Examples

Website: <https://www.prodigygame.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/Culturally-Responsive-Teaching-Strategies-and-Examples.pdf>

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