



PRINCIPLES OF THE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM

ADAPTED FROM *WE CAN'T LEAD WHERE WE WON'T GO: AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO EQUITY*

Principle 1: Students are affirmed in their cultural connections

Doorways:

- Teacher uses examples from the students' lives, making reference to important issues that affect them.
- Multi-cultural content is integrated in the curriculum.
- Reference is made to successful professionals in the field who come from diverse backgrounds.

Barriers:

- Classroom environment is bare and sparse.
- Students from diverse backgrounds are not able to see their culture reflected in the conversation or the curriculum.
- Students share stereotypes, insensitive comments, toleration of hurtful language (i.e., "that's so gay.")

Principle 2: Teacher is personally inviting

Doorways:

- Teacher welcomes students at the door with a friendly, respectful demeanor.
- Teacher clearly communicates enjoyment of students as well as care and respect for students.
- Teacher values input from a variety of different students.
- Teacher understands that different students sometimes need different approaches.

Barriers:

- Teacher stays only in front of the room
- Teacher engages only a small number of students in discussion
- Teacher uses sarcasm and put-downs with students
- Teacher turns to one student in class, asking him or her to speak for all students that share a similar background

Principle 3: Learning environments are culturally and physically inviting

Doorways:

- Décor in room reflects content of the course.
- Student work/projects displayed prominently.
- Multi-cultural images are displayed in the artwork, décor of the classroom.
- Visuals of career options related to the course are displayed.

Barriers:

- Room is bare and sterile.
- Structure of the room makes interaction difficult.
- Teacher space and student space are rigidly defined.

Principle 4: Students are reinforced for academic development

Doorways:

- Teacher provides individualized pacing of lessons, recognizing that students learn different ways.
- Teacher encourages students to be active learners who think and discover within the learning process.
- Teacher supports students who are struggling by providing additional help outside of class.
- Teacher provides positive feedback: "Great question," "Mistakes help you learn," "I know it's hard but you can do it."

Barriers:

- Large class sizes can make it difficult to gauge how each student is learning.
- Teacher doesn't reach out to the disengaged student and/or accepts mediocrity.
- Teacher fails to follow-up with a student after he or she gives a wrong response.
- Higher-level classes have a lack of ethnic/racial/economic diversity.

Principle 5: Instructional changes are made to accommodate difference in learners

Doorways:

- Teacher employs a range of learning activities.
- Teacher provides multiple ways for students to participate and show learning (orally, writing, graphically).
- Teacher uses technology to help students access information in diverse ways.
- Teacher varies instruction to show awareness and responsiveness to tensions that may affect diverse students.

Barriers:

- Teacher uses only one type of instruction.
- Teacher does not use feedback from assessments to inform future instruction.
- Teacher does not have understanding about individual students' background (including other languages spoken at home, culture, etc.).

Principle 6: Classroom is managed with firm, consistent, and caring control

Doorways:

- Seating arrangement promotes attentive student engagement.
- Teacher relays strong messages of caring and respect.
- Teachers use routines along with consistent strategies for dealing with disruptive students.

Barriers:

- Teacher allows difficult students to sit or work together.
- Teacher spends disproportionate energy on one student.
- Class has disproportionate number of high maintenance students in the same period.

Principle 7: Interactions stress collectivity as well as individuality

Doorways:

- Teacher builds small group and large group discussions regularly into instruction.
- Teacher thoughtfully forms small groups to get maximum diversity of gender, ethnicity, and ability.
- School creates opportunities for diversity leadership and cultural awareness workshops for students.

Barriers:

- Group projects have loose or unclear guidelines/expectations.
- Students are not taught how to work as a member of a group/team.
- Students compete against each other for the highest grades.