

Growing Culturally Welcoming and Validating Programs

Session 3: Training Staff and Volunteers

Session Handouts

FRAMEWORK & PHILOSOPHY FOR
DEVELOPING CULTURALLY WELCOMING AND
VALIDATING STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

By Ginlin Woo

Focus	Key Conversations
<p>✘ UNDERSTAND THE ROLE OF CULTURE IN THE LIFE OF CHILDREN & YOUTH</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining culture and the role of culture • The significance of identities and cultural memberships and the link between healthy self-esteem and cultural identity • Culture as a protective factor, asset, foundation for resiliency and healing • The importance of healthy self-esteem and supportive program staff and volunteers •
<p>✘ CLARIFY CONTEXTS THAT PUT THE SELF-ESTEEM OF CHILDREN & YOUTH 'AT-RISK'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family, school, and community environments where certain groups are marginalized and 'put down' or treated as 'invisible' • Internalized oppression of among individuals, families, and communities • Mass media broadcast of stereotypes, misinformation, gross generalizations • Programs, curricula, and individuals who operate from a 'deficit' paradigm • Cultural superiority framework •
<p>✘ UTILIZE CULTURALLY VALIDATING STRATEGIES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide participants opportunities to experience pride by getting to witness members from their own communities making important contributions to community life • Provide participants of diverse backgrounds opportunities to both hear and see members from their own communities involved in the key activities of the program

Focus	Key Conversations
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve valued resources and 'authentic voices' from diverse cultural groups to help anchor the program and/or curriculum • Coach students to understand the broad diversity that lives within any cultural group • Commit to going beyond 'heroes' and 'holidays' in the sharing of cultural experiences • Utilize the languages of the different cultural groups in the everyday programming • Demonstrate respect for objects, issues, sites, individuals, history, rituals, practices, protocol, etc. that are important to different cultural groups. • Facilitate opportunities for participants to grow in their depth of understanding and appreciation of different communities via service-learning and community involvement • Nurture participant knowledge and regard for the resiliency, values, and struggle of each cultural group in the community
<p>✘ SUPPORT STAFF & VOLUNTEERS TO BE CULTURAL ALLIES TO YOUTH AND EACH OTHER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are allies and what is their power for children and youth? • How does one become an effective cultural ally?
<p>✘ WORK TO ADDRESS ALL BUILDING BLOCKS FOR CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS</p>	<p>Ongoing work to make all areas of the program CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vision & mission ○ Staffing, leadership ○ Individual, organizational, community commitment ○ Guidance, policies, procedures, working agreements ○ Activities, programming, calendar ○ Recruitment, placement, and community engagement ○ Quality control – feedback, debriefing ○ Media & messaging ○ Resource mobilization – volunteers, dollars, non-fiscal resources, etc. ○ Recognition, celebration, acknowledgement activities



Learning Climate Outcomes:
**Welcoming, Honoring, Respectful, Safe, Productive, Dynamic, Active, Creative,
Generous, Efficient, Relevant, Inclusive**

GROUP WORKING AGREEMENTS OR GUIDELINES

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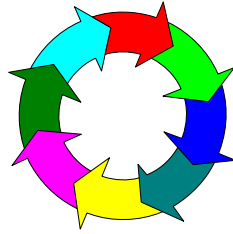
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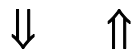
WORKING AGREEMENTS OR GUIDELINES

- ◆ Listen, not just hear
- ◆ Be very honest
- ◆ Everyone actively participate
- ◆ Everyone has the option to 'pass'
- ◆ Honor all the ways people will help
- ◆ Respect time
- ◆ Respect all ideas
- ◆ Have fun
- ◆ Honor all opinions
- ◆ Take care of your needs
- ◆ Share what you know
- ◆ Be genuine and tolerant
- ◆ Be open
- ◆ Assume the best intentions
- ◆ Have fun
- ◆ No "put downs"
- ◆ Mutual respect/active listening
- ◆ Challenge each other's comfort levels
- ◆ Take opportunity to build awareness
- ◆ Acknowledge different styles of participation/learning
- ◆ Kreative spelling
- ◆ Welcome all points of view
- ◆ Have a "learn to learn" attitude
- ◆ Show up 100 percent
- ◆ Ask for what you want or need
- ◆ Be on time
- ◆ Agree to disagree
- ◆ Be mindful of members who are absent
- ◆ Share a mutual level of accountability
- ◆ VOLUNTEER, VOLUNTEER, VOLUNTEER!
- ◆ Agree to disagree
- ◆ Share responsibility for success of team
- ◆ Rotate leadership opportunity
- ◆ Be transparent



CYCLE FOR ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING TEAM GUIDELINES

- **Acknowledge Existing Norms**



- **Explain and Give Examples**



- **Brainstorm Other Needed or Desired Conditions**



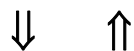
- **Clarify**



- **Check for Congruency**

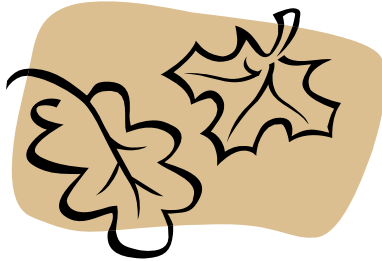


- **Establish Group Commitment**



- **Model Support**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROMOTING A RESPECT FOR DIVERSITY



1. **Model the behavior you desire.**
2. **Clarify the behaviors that will not be tolerated and explain the reasoning behind each “non-negotiable.”**
3. **Challenge stereotypical assumptions, misinformation, and mistreatment of others.**
4. **Rotate small group membership and spread out leadership opportunities, privileges, and rewards across the team.**
5. **Use problems and conflicts as learning opportunities.**
6. **Organize ongoing opportunities for cross-cultural sharing.**
7. **Use training and team meetings to raise awareness about cultural differences.**
8. **Engage the team in facilitating for themselves open, respectful dialogue about issues of diversity.**
9. **Foster ally relationships among team members.**

10. Continually refine the team's and the organization's policies, procedures, activities, programs, physical space, and printed material making sure that they communicate a consistent message about inclusion and respecting diversity.

10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children's Books for Racism and Sexism

from The Council on Interracial Books for Children

Both in school and out children are exposed to racist and sexist attitudes. These attitudes - expressed over and over in books and other media - gradually distort their perceptions until stereotypes and myths about minorities and women are accepted as reality. It is difficult for a librarian or teacher to convince children to question society's attitudes. But if a child can be shown how to detect racism and sexism in a book, the child can proceed to transfer the perception to wider areas. The following ten guidelines are offered as a starting point in evaluation children's books from this perspective.

1. Check the Illustrations

Look for Stereotypes. A stereotype is an over-simplified generalization about a particular group, race or sex, which usually carries derogatory implications. Some infamous (overt) stereotypes of blacks are the happy-go-lucky, watermelon-eating Sambo and the fat, eye-rolling "mammy"; of Chicanos, the sombrero-wearing peon or fiesta-loving, macho bandito; of Asian Americans, the inscrutable, slant-eyed "Oriental"; of Native Americans, the naked savage or "primitive brave" and his "squaw"; of Puerto Ricans, the switchblade-toting teenage gang member; of women, the completely domesticated mother, the demure, doll-loving little girl or the wicked stepmother. While you may not always find stereotypes in the blatant forms described, look for variations which in any way demean or ridicule characters because of their race or sex.

Look for Tokenism. If there are racial minority characters in the illustrations, do they look just like whites except for being tinted or colored in? Do all minority faces look stereotypically alike, or are they depicted as genuine individuals with distinctive features?

Who's Doing What? Do the illustrations depict minorities in subservient and passive roles or in leadership and action roles? Are males the active "doers" and females the inactive observers?

2. Check the Story Line

Liberation movements have led publishers to weed out many insulting passages, particularly from stories with Black themes and from books depicting female characters; however, racist and sexist attitudes still find expression in less obvious ways. The following checklist suggests some of the subtle (covert) form of bias to watch for.

Standards for Success. Does it take "white" behavior standards for a minority person to "get ahead"? Is "making it" in the dominant white society projected as the only ideal? To gain

acceptance and approval, do persons of color have to exhibit extraordinary qualities - excel in sports, get As, etc.? In friendships between white and non-white children, is it the child of color who does most of the understanding and forgiving?

Resolution of Problems. How are problems presented, conceived and resolved in the story? Are minority people considered to be "the problem"? Are the oppressions faced by minorities and women represented as related to social injustice? Are the reasons for poverty and oppression explained, or are they accepted as inevitable? Does the story line encourage passive acceptance or active resistance? Is a particular problem that is faced by a racial minority person or female resolved through the benevolent intervention of a white person or male?

Role of Women. Are the achievements of girls and women based on their own initiative and intelligence, or are they due to their good looks or to their relationship with boys? Are sex roles incidental or critical to characterization and plot? could the same story be told if the sex roles were reversed?

3. Look at the Lifestyles

Are minority persons and their setting depicted in such a way that they contrast unfavorably with the unstated norm of white middle-class suburbia? If the minority group in question is depicted as "different", are negative value judgments implied? Are minorities depicted exclusively in ghettos, barrios, or migrant camps? If the illustrations and text attempt to depict another culture, do they go beyond over-simplifications and offer genuine insight into another lifestyle? Look for inaccuracy and inappropriateness in the depiction of other cultures. Watch for instances of the "quaint-natives-in-costume" syndrome (most noticeable in areas like clothing and custom, but extending to behavior and personality traits as well).

4. Weigh the Relationships Between People

Do the whites in the story possess the power, take the leadership, and make the important decisions? Do racial minorities and females of all races function in essentially supporting roles?

How are family relationships depicted? In Black families, is the mother always dominant? In Hispanic families, are there always lots of children? If the family is separated, are societal conditions - unemployment, poverty, for example - cited among the reasons for the separation?

5. Note the Heroes

For many years, books showed only "safe" minority heroes - those who avoided serious conflict with the white establishment of their time. Minority groups today are insisting on the right to define their own heroes (of both sexes) based on their own concepts and struggles for justice.

When minority heroes do appear, are they admired for the same qualities that have made white heroes famous or because what they have done has benefited white people? Ask this question: "Whose interest is a particular hero really serving?"

6. Consider the Effect on a Child's Self-Image

Are norms established which limit any child's aspirations and self-concept? What effect can it have on images of the color white as the ultimate in beauty, cleanliness, virtue, etc., and the color black as evil, dirty, menacing, etc.? Does the book counteract or reinforce this positive association with the color white and negative association with black?

What happens to a girl's self-image when she reads that boys perform all of the brave and important deeds? What about a girl's self-esteem if she is not "fair" of skin and slim of body?

In a particular story, is there one or more persons with whom a minority child can readily identify to a positive and constructive end?

7. Consider the Author's or Illustrator's Background

Analyze the biographical material on the jacket flap or the back of the book. If a story deals with a minority theme, what qualifies the author or illustrator to deal with the subject? If the author and illustrator are not members of the minority being written about, is there anything in their background that would specifically recommend them as the creators of this book?

8. Check Out the Author's Perspective

No author can be wholly objective. All authors write out of a cultural, as well as a personal context. Children's books in the past have traditionally come from authors who were white and who were members of the middle class, with one result being that a single ethnocentric perspective has dominated children's literature in the United States. With any book in question, read carefully to determine whether the direction of the author's perspective substantially weakens or strengthens the value of his/her written work. Is the perspective patriarchal or feminist? is it solely eurocentric, or do minority cultural perspectives also appear?

9. Watch for Loaded Words

A word is loaded when it has insulting overtones. Examples of loaded adjectives (usually racist) are "savage," "primitive," "lazy," "superstitious," "treacherous," "wily," "crafty," "inscrutable," "docile," and "backward".

Look for sexist language and adjectives that exclude or ridicule women. Look for use of the male pronoun to refer to both males and females. While the generic use of the word "man" was accepted in the past, its use today is outmoded. The following examples show how sexist language can be avoided: ancestors instead of forefathers; chairperson instead of chairman;

community instead of brotherhood; firefighters instead of firemen; manufactured instead of manmade; the human family instead of the family of man.

10. Look at the Copyright Date

Books on minority themes - usually hastily conceived - suddenly began appearing in the mid-1960s. There followed a growing number of 'minority experience' books to meet the new market demand, but most of these were still written by the white authors, edited by white editors and published by white publishers. They therefore reflected a white point of view. Not until the early 1970s has the children's book world begun to even remotely reflect the realities of a multiracial society. The new direction resulted from the emergence of minority authors writing about their own experiences. Unfortunately, this trend has been reversing, as publishers have cut back on such books. Non-sexist books, with rare exceptions, were not published before 1973.

The copyright dates, therefore, can be a clue as to how likely the book is to be overtly racist or sexist, although a recent copyright date, of course, is no guarantee of a book's relevance or sensitivity. The copyright date only means the year the book was published. It usually takes about two years from the time a manuscript is submitted to the publisher to the time it is actually printed and put on the market. This time lag meant very little in the past, but in a time of rapid change and changing consciousness, when children's book publishing is attempting to be "relevant," it is becoming increasingly significant.

NATIVE AMERICAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE CLASSROOM AN ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Joan Berman

October 1998; June 1999; February 2002; January 2004; November 2007

In my dual roles as Native American Studies Librarian and children's literature specialist at the Humboldt State University Library I am often asked to recommend "good" Native American children's books. I have prepared this bibliography as an introduction to a complex topic. I invite the reader to explore the selections, bearing in mind that although I have attempted to include the major works on the subject, I have also noted items of specific interest to the local, California community. This was initially prepared as an example of an annotated bibliography for my class, Professional Studies 180: Library Sources in Education, Fall 1998.

Caldwell-Wood, N., & Mitten, L. (1992). "I" is "not" for Indian: The portrayal of Native Americans in books for young people. *Multicultural Review*, 1(2), 26-33. The authors were president and secretary of the American Indian Library Association at the time this article was written; it is an adaptation of a program presented at the American Library Association Annual Conference in 1991. The selective annotated bibliography is in four parts: recommended titles, titles to avoid, guides to selecting books and sources of current reviews, and sources for books on Indians. This is an excellent, accessible introduction to the subject.

Charles, J. (1996). Out of the cupboard and into the classroom: children and the American Indian literary experience. *Children's Literature in Education*, 27(3), 167-179. This is a very accessible critique of the *Indian in the Cupboard*. The author, a professor of English Education, discussed the book in the context of six "myths" about American Indians. He then provides examples of four books written by American Indian people which can help to dispel these myths.

Dorris, M. (1993). Trusting the words. *Booklist*, 89(19/20), 1820-1822. In a very personal manner Dorris describes the dilemma he encountered when preparing to read the Little House books to his daughters. He had loved reading them as a child but had developed a different perspective in the years since he founded the Native American Studies Program at Dartmouth College in 1972. This is the best explanation I have seen of the problems with the much loved Laura Ingalls Wilder books.

Hirschfelder, A. B. (1982). *American Indian stereotypes in the world of children: a reader and bibliography*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press. The purpose of this anthology is made clear by the following quote from the ERIC abstract (ED 225 785): "Created to try to shock people into realizing that a child's world is supersaturated with hundreds of images of savage, noble, lazy, or nonhuman Indians that obscure, misrepresent, and render trivial the rich cultures and histories of Native Americans, the reader is intended for early childhood, elementary, and secondary educators and general public." It serves as a marker of the situation in 1982.

Hirschfelder, A. B. (1993). Native American literature for children and young adults. *Library Trends*, 41(3), 414-436. In this survey article Hirschfelder provides both an excellent introduction to various issues and then highlights a number of titles, both fiction and non-fiction, published in the last decade which, in her opinion, "accurately depict American Indian cultural traditions." She closes with a caveat: "The heightened interest in Native American culture must be tempered with concern for acquiring accurate books that show respect for Native American traditions and histories."

"It is still that way": American Indians in children's literature. (1993). Berkeley, CA: The Association of Children's Librarians of Northern California. The ACL presents an annual institute on a topic in children's literature. This 55 page bibliography is from the March 1993 Institute. It includes a separate list of "Not Recommended" titles with a brief reason for each title.

Kuipers, B. J. (1995). *American Indian reference and resource books for children and young adults* (2nd edition). Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited. The main part of this book consists of annotated lists of recommended non-fiction arranged by Dewey Decimal categories. This would be an excellent place to turn when you are faced with an out of date collection in a school or public library and wish to recommend newer, more factually accurate and culturally sensitive titles. In addition, the introductory chapters go into depth on evaluation criteria and provide lists of reference sources and selected American Indian bibliographies.

LaBonty, J. (1995). A demand for excellence in books for children. *Journal of American Indian Education*, 34(2), 1-9. The author summarizes this article more effectively than I can. "The purpose of this paper is to discuss, from a scholarly viewpoint, the differences between demanding excellence in books for children and censorship. Books written expressly for children are judged by the criteria for literary and artistic excellence. Books with minority characters are held to an additional set of criteria for excellence. In the case of *The Indian in the Cupboard* trilogy by Lynn Reid Banks, objections to her books by American Indians is supported by the aforementioned criteria and is not an example of censoring a book because someone may not like it. The paper outlines why the historical and linguistic inaccuracies and the negative stereotypes of the Iroquoian characters in these particular books make them unacceptable for either required reading in the grade schools or as a read-aloud book."

Lehman, C. (1998). Gold Rush and genocide: what are we telling children about our bloody past? *School Library Journal*, 44(9), 118-119. Against the background of the multi-year celebration of the Sesquicentennial of the Gold Rush in California it is most useful to have this thoughtful review of recent as well as older titles.

Leitch Smith, Cynthia. (2002). "A Different Drum: Native American Writing." *Horn Book*, 78(4), 409-12. In a recent manuscript this author, who maintains an excellent children's literature website with an emphasis on Native American children's books, deleted a piece of "old-time Indian humor" because non-Indians wouldn't get it. In this article she reflects on that decision: "In the aftermath, I'm wondering if cutting that joke was the right decision. And it's left me pondering a larger question: Is there any place in children's books for writing that

reflects Native idiosyncracies? Or rather, if diversity of choice matters at all, does it only apply to diversity that appeals to the mainstream audience?"

[Oyate On-Line](http://www.oyate.org) (1999). <http://www.oyate.org> (10 June 1999) Oyate provides reliable information about and access to publications for children and teachers about Native peoples. Of current interest is the lengthy critical review of the "Indian" entry in Scholastic's Dear America series, *My Heart is on the Ground*.

Reese, D. (1996). *Teaching young children about Native Americans*. (ERIC Digest). (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 394 744). ERIC Digests are brief summaries of a topic. They provide references for further study and they are themselves available on the AskERIC web site to be freely reproduced. This one suggests specific strategies teachers can use in their classrooms to counter stereotyped portrayal of Native Americans. It also lists some practices to avoid. This is a good succinct update to Hirschfelder 1982.

Reese, D. (1998). Field Notes: "Mom, Look! It's George, and He's a TV Indian!" *Horn Book*, 74, 636-643. The author highlights 11 of the "very few picture books that simply tell stories about contemporary Native children." This is preceded by a poignant reflection on the experience she and her daughter have had in moving from a reservation to the University of Illinois, an area with a "very low Native population."

Reese, D. (2007). Proceed with Caution: Using Native American Folktales in the Classroom. *Language Arts*, 84(3), 245-256. After a general discussion of the portrayal of American Indians in folktale picture books, Reese analyzes two retellings, *Turkey Girl* by Penny Pollock and *Dragonfly's Tale* by Kristina Rodanus. Reese, a Nambe Pueblo Indian woman, also maintains an excellent blog [American Indians in Children's Literature](#).

Short, M. ([1969?]). *The American Indian: A bibliography of childrens' books, material in the Humboldt State College Elementary School Library, Humboldt State College, Arcata, California*. Arcata, CA: Humboldt State College. Obviously this bibliography is out of date. I have included it to remind myself that I need to decide whether it would be appropriate to revise and/or update it or if such a list is needed in the present environment of online catalogs.

Slapin, B. & Seale, D. (1998). *Through Indian eyes: The Native experience in books for children* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, University of California. This is the fourth edition of a classic work originally published in 1987 under the title *Books without bias: through Indian eyes*. It is required reading for teachers.

Stott, J. C. (1995). *Native Americans in children's literature*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press. This book is valuable for its in-depth literary analysis of specific titles and authors, e.g., *The Indian in the Cupboard*, *Brother Eagle, Sister Sky*, Paul Goble, Gerald McDermott, Scott O'Dell, Jean George, as well as genres of children's literature, e.g., picture books, retellings of folk tales, novels. It includes a useful appendix on incorporating Native stories in the language arts program complete with outlines for thematic author units. Stott also writes occasional articles on Native American children's literature for *American Indian Quarterly*.



Dialogue Values

- ★ Diversity allows for true dialogue to occur
- ★ Reflection is action.
- ★ The more viewpoints that can be generated, the more valuable the dialogue.
- ★ Shared understanding is the goal, not about being right or wrong.
- ★ The value is in discovery and in ideas, not in making decisions or arriving at conclusions.

Steps for Facilitating Dialogue

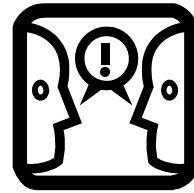
- ◆ Create a safe environment with working guidelines.
- ◆ Share and clarify group leadership roles as facilitator, recorder, reporter, or timekeeper.
- ◆ Suspend judgment.
- ◆ Encourage each other's full participation.
- ◆ Examine topics from multiple viewpoints and multicultural perspectives.
- ◆ Ask questions from a position of curiosity.
- ◆ Listen respectfully.

a foundation respect activity
SHARING OUR NAMES

(Adapted by G. Woo, 1998)

1. What is your full name: _____
2. Share any background history to your name you would like. Does your name have a meaning? Were you named for someone special to your family? Do you have other names? How did you get them?
3. Do you have nicknames? Who called or calls you these names? Do you like nicknames? How did you get them?
4. Do people change your name? Does it get shortened? How do you feel about this?
5. Do you like your name? If not, what name would you like to be called?
6. What name do you want to be called during our time together?

DEFINITIONS



CULTURE

1. Culture refers to the shared language, behavior, customs, symbols, knowledge, pattern of comprehending reality and the ability to create or determine history. (Dr. Wade Nobles, 1986.)
2. Culture is the dynamic patterns of learned behaviors values or beliefs exhibited by a group of people who share historical and geographical proximity or the shared values, norms traditions, customs, arts, history, folklore and institutions of a group of people or the vast structure of behaviors, ideas, attitudes, values, habits, beliefs, customs, language, rituals, ceremonies and practices peculiar to a particular group of people and which provides them with a general design for living and patterns for interpreting reality. It teaches people to recognize phenomena and to respect certain logical relations amongst phenomena. Culture gives meaning to reality. As such it has the power to compel behavior and the capacity to reinforce ideas and beliefs about human functioning, especially family processes and community life. When viable and intact, the cultural system provides the community with the capacity to resist negative agents and or prevent the development of processes antithetical to the communities own well-being, viability. It is the protective and/or process which stimulates and must be stimulated in order to counter non-wellness in the community. (Dr. Wade Nobles. 1986)
3. Culture is the way of life of a society. The prescribed ways of behaving, beliefs, values, and skills are various aspects of culture. It is the sum total of life patterns passed on from one generation to the next within a group of people. Culture is a code that guides interpretation of behavior. (Orlandi. 1992.)
4. Culture is the shared values, norms, traditions customs, arts history, folklore, and institutions of a group of people. Culture is not static but is constantly being altered.
5. "Diversity refers to differences between groups with distinctive characteristics and social identities based on culture, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, ability and class...also, diversity is inseparable from issues of oppression and social and economic justice."

Van Soest, D., & Garcia, B. (2003). *Diversity education for social justice: Mastering teaching skills*. Alexandria, VA: Council on Social Work Education.

DEFINITIONS OF CULTURAL COMPETENCY

"Cultural competence...refers to the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms and values the worth of individuals, families, and communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each"

National Association of Social Workers National Committee on Racial and Ethnic Diversity (2001).
www.naswdc.org/standards/cultural.htm

Cultural competence is defined as a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enables that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations

(Cross et al., 1989; Issacs & Benjamin, 1991).

Operationally defined, cultural competence is the integration and transformation of knowledge about individuals and groups of people into specific standards, polices, practices, and attitudes used in appropriate cultural settings to increase the quality of services; thereby producing better outcomes

(Davis, 1977 referring to health outcomes).

The ability to effectively communicate with members of a variety of cultures.

A culturally competent person has developed a secure self-image, strategies for non-biased perception, and the ability to not be threatened by difference. This, in turn, gives a person the strength of self, flexibility, and resiliency needed to move into other cultures and act effectively.

Cultural competence is not a state of achievement; it is a process of learning how to learn about other cultures.

(Annabelle Nelson , The Learning Wheel)

CULTURE "Berg"

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Tutors Can Be Allies for Students: Putting Allianceship at the Top of Your Agenda for Students and Families

By Ginlin Woo for LEARNS Partners

One of my school allies was definitely Ms. Jensen. As a 5th grader, I observed her respect, fairness, and kindness to all students firsthand and remember appreciating the parts of the day when I could be in her classroom. She was a lover of history and made Pacific Northwest history come alive for us. I still remember when we made dioramas and were invited to imagine what people were feeling, hoping, fearing, and thinking as they struggled to form communities. She encouraged us to question and examine things from different points of view.

It was Ms. Jensen I turned to when I decided to confront a situation at our school where a new physical education teacher was abusive and many of us had been victims to his cruelty. I wanted to quit school; she wanted me to problem solve and think through my options. One week later, in full view of everyone during lunch period, a core of us students presented the Vice Principal with a petition signed by every 5th grader with a threat of a walk-out and a call for a special parents' meeting. The next day the school administration held a meeting with the offending teacher and our student group to discuss the problem. We talked and the situation got better immediately. The teacher ended up staying and so did I.

Ms. Jensen believed in us and facilitated our problem solving. For a small female, living in a basement in Chinatown, learning English as a second language, and struggling almost daily with the cultural insensitivity that surrounded me at school, Ms. Jensen was just the ally I needed.

Many of us are fortunate enough to be able to think back and identify a number of allies like “Ms. Jensen” who, through their beliefs, words, and actions, made a real difference in our school lives. They, in their humble, compassionate, and principled ways acted as allies for us and many other students. Most of our allies would be surprised to know just how we cherish their contribution(s) to our learning and safer passage through our school years.

It remains too often the case that a majority of our most “different” and marginalized students are also our most misunderstood and mistreated. They, like all students, require many allies, and without them struggle to find success during their tenure in schools and school programs. When students are made targets because of their ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation, abilities, disabilities, size, cultural membership, proficiency with English, place of national origin, immigration status, family background, political beliefs, or political status, learning definitely becomes encumbered.

The role of ally and “allianceship” is critically important and needs promotion. From numerous accounts we know that the attitudes and acts of allies are powerful, long lasting, and critical to positive youth development. Ally stories inform us that allies come in different shapes, sizes, ages, roles, backgrounds, and sexual orientation. All ally behaviors seem to share some common elements, as well as exhibit some variation in the contribution they make. This discussion will attempt to highlight important actions of allies and invite the reader to consider how taking on the role of an ally can not only enhance literacy development for children but also improve the chances of school and life success.

▪ ***What are allies?***

*"An ally is someone who speaks up or takes action against oppression that is not targeted at them."
(Yeskl & Wright, 1997).*

Allies

Build and broker relationships;

Relate and share information;

Advocate for justice;

Validate experiences; and

Explain norms.

(Nakashima & Hickman, 1995).

Generally, allies are principled individuals who, through their daily, simple acts of courage and compassion, challenge prejudice, discrimination, ignorance, misinformation, cultural isolation, internalized oppression, alienation, poverty, limited resources, skewed power relationships, and their own privileges. Allies are advocates for equity, access, dignity, and respect. They are committed to promoting cultural pride, empowerment, and senses of self-worth and belonging in the young people around them. Where many see “individual deficits” and cultural differences as the problem, allies appreciate the many assets and “gifts” that students, parents, neighborhoods, and communities culturally different than themselves bring to the learning experience, and they operate with the understanding that the problem is systemic.

▪ ***Who are allies?***

Allies are “barrier-busters.” Allies come from every part of the school and community and may be parents, family members, neighbors, friends, siblings, peers, tutors, local storekeepers, administrative staff, lunch room staff, custodians, bus drivers, people who manage the front office, school volunteers, classroom teachers, school aides, community members, leaders, etc. Often, allies have personal histories or knowledge that motivate them to help others traverse the school system and other societal institutions more effectively. The larger vision of allies calls for the restructuring and transformation of schools so that all students and families have opportunities to thrive in their learning. Allies may or may not share cultural membership (ethnicity, age, gender, class, sexual orientation, physical and mental ability and disability, immigration status, etc.) with the youth they help. Allies are individuals who make lasting commitments to building their awareness and competencies for working and living in harmony with cultures and communities different than their own (Nelson, 1995). Allies are not born, but develop over time and deed. With every effort made to challenge conditions, systems, practices, programming and discriminatory attitudes that make targets of young people, allies grow in their capacity to change and transform conditions.

▪ ***What are ally beliefs and how do Ally beliefs strengthen school diversity?***

Most allies appear to operate from a fierce personal commitment to and vision of what is a fair, just, healthy, and compassionate school, community, and society. Ally behavior indicates some common beliefs such as:

- ❖ Each youth is unique and to be valued.
- ❖ An ally's role is to facilitate, improve, and empower students, families, staff, and schools to make conditions better for all students.
- ❖ The total ecology of the school and community matters – values, content, practices, vision, individuals, staffing, language, climate, structure, organization, cultures, communities, system of privileges, etc.
- ❖ Cultural competency is a commitment, a process, and a life journey.

▪ ***How do allies strengthen efforts to develop literacy?***

While the vast majority of tutors, teachers, school personnel, and program staffers are caring and well intentioned, not all of them are the allies they could be for the young people and families they serve. Students who need help with reading and language development are struggling in school for numerous reasons and these reasons are often systemic and connected to issues of diversity within the school culture. Single strategies and "one-size-fits-all" approaches have not and will not work. Problems for struggling readers are often multi-layered and are exacerbated by school priorities, rituals, practices and protocol that embraces culture in which they share no membership. For many young people, their whole person (mind, body, spirit, emotion, social/cultural legacy and identity, diversity, family, community, and school history) is not yet welcomed and honored in most reading programs. Allies see how the lack of access and respect, the isolation, and the incompatibility of values tear at learning. Allies recognize that reading programs, like schools often reflect the values, process, and priorities of only a narrow spectrum of cultures. Allies not only understand that reading is a complex skill, but also understand that there is a direct connection between their sense of acceptance in the culture of the school and program and their ability to gain in their confidence to bring meaning to print. Where canned reading programs are designed to primarily address what are perceived to be areas of skill deficit in readers and generally are inflexible and free of variation no matter who the students are, allies take the opportunity to build from the language and culture of students. Where tutors, teachers, and volunteers have integrated addressing issues of diversity within their program, deeper levels of learning are possible.

Seize the Opportunities!

Within the arena of literacy development, allies seize the opportunities to:

- **Facilitate Learning Climates that Work to Honor All Learners-** The culture and climate of the school can be fairly hostile to students who are perceived to be culturally different from the narrow norm. When allies work hard to facilitate learning environments which are safe, welcoming, respectful of everyone, and valuing of the learner's cultures and experiences, learners can relax and better focus on the learning at hand. Allies -
 - ◆ Develop, clarify, and reinforce norms, classroom rules or working guidelines of mutual respect, cooperative learning, cultural appreciation, etc.
 - ◆ Honor cultural and linguistic values and traditions by making a place for them within reading activities and the curriculum.
 - ◆ Commit to meeting each student as a unique individual with talents, hopes, passions, gifts, and challenges, as well as someone who has many cultural memberships.

- ◆ Work at being sensitive to students' challenges and home lives and avoid making gross generalizations, unfeeling comments, or creating expectations that cannot be easily met given current financial, emotional, physical, and cultural realities.
- ◆ Carefully select print material, words, and images that help dispel stereotypes, correct misinformation, and work to diminish internalized oppression.
- ◆ Dignify the reading process by making use of print resources that support their development of healthy self-esteem, cultural identity, and sense of inclusion.
- ◆ Model an appreciation and respect for all cultures and periodically conduct self-audits of the learning environment for cultural competence.
- ◆ Work with and for students to help make them restructure learning environments to be more "user-friendly." This not only facilitates the lowering of anxiety for many neglected learners, but also teaches students that it is within their power to help make the classroom more responsive to other student's needs.
- ◆ Take every opportunity to bridge the culture of the students with the culture and climate of the school and school program by using cross-cultural perspectives which allow them to share important information about both the home/community or school/program contexts without placing value judgements on either.
- ◆ Assess the program and school climate for different issues of access and privilege and work with others to change these conditions.

Address Issues of Diversity while Helping Students Build Knowledge and Skills that Will Help Them with Reading- The feelings, experiences, and passions that students have and the many day-to-day challenges that students face are powerful motivation for honing skills and potent material for a language development program. Too few young people are learning that the skill of reading can be useful in their efforts to understand themselves and others and to do real life problem solving. To do this, allies -

- ◆ Select content that is relevant to the lives of the students and places them in empowering roles.
- ◆ Nurture critical thinking and teach for social justice by exposing students to information, role models, literature, and processes that encourage them to question and problem solve real life dilemmas with fairness and compassion.
- ◆ Structure literacy development time in a manner that reflects a use of multiple strategies to meet diverse situations, cultural contexts, and learning styles.
- ◆ Incorporate into their lessons and structured language experiences many different "authentic voices" from the literature, oratory, and traditions of many cultures, especially those in which the students have membership.
- ◆ Integrate at least some basic phrases from student's home languages into the learning experience.
- ◆ Learn and make use of culturally responsive teaching strategies to reach students more naturally and enhance their learning.
- ◆ Enrich the reading program with information about the families' and communities' different linguistic traditions - storytelling, chanting, drama, oral and aural tradition, languages of proficiency, knowledge about whose role it is to speak to whom about what, most frequent forms of written communication, etc.
- ◆ Build on the student's communication gifts - storytelling, joking, composing, singing, listening, drama, and passion for news, poetry, rhythm, or metaphor.

Build an Understanding and Appreciation for the Community and Context of the Student-

Understanding that there may be many different kinds of barriers that stand in the way of students learning how to read is an important insight. Another is that an important key to opening the world of reading to young people might be in readily available in their home or community is another. The more that teachers, tutors, and helpers understand the context, place, or world in which learners will be practicing, refining and using their reading skills and use this information to inform their strategies, the more focused, comprehensive, and relevant the coaching of reading can be. Allies -

- ◆ Study the many non-reading challenges which confront English-As-Second Language learners, such as, circumstances for immigration or migration, fluency with first language, family/community bilingual resources, family work situation, struggles to have basic needs met, etc.
- ◆ Know and share information about available community resources that could contribute to the health and well-being of students and their families, e.g., language translators, feeding programs, dental care, legal help, job training programs, mental health counseling, culture classes, tenant rights organizations, drug-free social activities, mentoring and community service opportunities, community service agencies, etc.
- ◆ Seek to understand the challenges students face as they are forced to cross-cultural code switch (between language and value systems) many times a day in home, school, community, play, work, etc.
- ◆ Seek to understand what are the home and community conditions that support and compete with the strengthening of reading for each person being tutored

Maximize Learning through Building Strong Relationships with Students, Families, and School Personnel-

Just as the learning climate is important, so is the quality and composition of the network of people who surround struggling readers. Allies know the importance of reaching out to each student while strengthening relationships and facilitating partnerships with significant individuals in the lives of students who can help address different problems that interface with the development of reading competencies. Allies -

- ◆ Take time to learn each student's story, family, and cultural history, and model for students how to do this respectfully. Invite each young person to share who she or he is, putting on hold what can easily be seen. Students need to be fostered in the knowledge that only some of what a person is can be observed from the outside, and who a person is is internal and needs to be revealed or discovered.
- ◆ Take time to share appropriate information about oneself with student, family, and school.
- ◆ Refuse to label, “type,” categorize, or gossip about students and their families, and be willing to confront conversations that you hear.
- ◆ Help bridge information gaps that exist between students, the school, and families.
- ◆ Partner with schools and the community to build more culturally sensitive activities, programs, and processes.
- ◆ Partner with schools and the community to increase student access to opportunities to build study skills, receive positive recognition, make connections to mentors

and caring adults, join in service learning, and participate in healthy, drug-free activities.

- ◆ Partner with parents, families, and caregivers to understand and carry out their role to support student learning and success.
- ◆ Partner with parents, families, and caregivers to understand what contributions they make and can make to the school/program and learning of all students as volunteers, speakers, resources, etc.
- ◆ Facilitate ongoing activities that help strengthen communications between programs, home, and school.
- ◆ Work in collaboration with school personnel and parents to effectively challenge and bridge barriers that the schools create for students and their families.

CONCLUSION

Hopefully this reflection on ally-ship will help spark important discussions and recommitment for all who are involved in visioning and clarifying a tutor's role. Remember, when ally stories are heard and told, they often linger and conspire to help make us recommit ourselves to our own growth, and to following through with seemingly simple acts that make a difference across the school program, curricula, culture, and community. Let each of us take inspiration from the legacy of our own allies and the many allies in our midst and join with others to work more diligently to meet the social, educational, spiritual, physical, and diverse needs of all young people.

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Edited by Mauriann Adams, Lee Anne Bell & Pat Griffin, *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Source Book* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1997). This curriculum is geared for adult learners and is valuable for individuals working to structure workshops to help adults address issues of diversity and build a theoretical base for their work.

Edited by Bill Bigelow, Linda Christensen, Stan Karp, Barbara Miner, and Bob Peterson, Special Edition of "Rethinking Schools", *Rethinking Our Classrooms: Teaching for Equity and Justice* (Milwaukee, WI, 1994) What awaits the practitioner is this exciting collection of strategies and discussions written by practitioners primarily in K-12 classrooms. Teachers write about their experiences, things they try with their kids and their challenges. Lots of experience and ideas are shared for facilitating with young people discussions about name-calling, evaluating materials for bias, social class, etc.

Louise Derman-Sparks and the A.B.C. Task Force, *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children* (Washington D.C.: the National Association for the Education of Young Children ((NAEYE)), 1998) Focused primarily on early childhood populations, this collection both provides a clear discussion of basic diversity concepts and details lots of activities that can be used not only with young children.

Edited by Violet J. Harris, *Using Multiethnic Literature in the K-8 Classroom* (Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc., 1997) This multicultural children's

- literature resource provides critical analysis of ethnic specific writings. membership. This resource provides important guidance on selecting reading material.
- J. Hixson and M.B. Tinzmann, "Who Are the "At-Risk" Students of the 1990s?" paper available from the National Mentoring Network (NCREL, Oak Brook, 1990) This paper clarifies different perspectives on notions of "at risk" and challenges practitioners to think systemically
- Linda Lantieri and Janet Patti, *Waging Peace in Our Schools* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1996) Tried and true strategies for facilitating peaceable learning communities are documented and discussed in this volume. Lots of resources and insights to help allies facilitate safe and respectful learning climates.
- Edited by Enid Lee, Deborah Menkart & Margo Okazawa-Rey, *Beyond Heroes and Holidays* (Washington DC: Network of Educators on the Americas ((NECA)), 1998) Practical guide to K-12 anti-racist, multicultural education, and staff development. The back section of the volume contains is a multicultural resource guide that lists different print and media resources both by content areas and issues of diversity
- Edited by Lauren Miller and the Poetry for the People Collective, *June Jordan's Poetry for the People: A Revolutionary Blueprint*: (New York, NY: Routledge,1995) Creative way to encourage young people to express themselves through poetry. It documents a unique learning process and the power of poetry in the lives of young adults.
- Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Equity Center, *Improving Education for Immigrant Students: A Guide for K-12 Educators in the Northwest and Alaska* (Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory ((NWREL)), 1998) This clearly written resource provides good background information to help tutors understand the social/cultural/political, emotional, and linguistic needs and traditions of immigrant students. This guide was specifically designed to help practitioners in the Alaska and the Northwest States of the United States, but has important information for all regions.
- Sarah E. Torian, "When the Tutor and Child Do Not Look Alike: Diversity Training for Tutors," published in *The Tutor* (Atlanta, GA: Southern Regional Council for the Corporation for National Service, Fall 1998) This easy to access resource could be used by teams and supervisors to spark discussion about issues of diversity. The 10 tips for selecting books and instructional materials is reprinted the pioneering work of the Council on Interracial Books for Children and remains excellent guidance for materials selection.

List of Important Things to Understand About a New Cultural Community

(Source: G. Woo)

- ⇒ What values, practices, relationships, and rituals are important, and what people, places, resources, attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors are held in sacred ways.
- ⇒ How does the community describe, name, and define itself.
- ⇒ How respect is defined and practiced.
- ⇒ What are the “non-negotiables” of the community? For every community, there are usually rules that govern one’s conduct regarding relationships and different kinds of resources that are very important to respect and not violate.
- ⇒ What is the history of the community –social, spiritual, political, economic, diversity, major successes, major conflicts and struggles, cross-cultural experiences?
- ⇒ What are the major groups, sectors, and relationships groups have with one another?
- ⇒ What is the structure of the community? How does the community organize itself?
- ⇒ Who are the formal and informal leaders - who are viewed as “spokes-people” and the “elder voices” or keepers of wisdom and knowledge.
- ⇒ What are the traditions of service, how helping others and “volunteering” is understood and lived out within and across this new community.
- ⇒ What is the rhythm of a day, week, season, year, and important cycles?
- ⇒ Who has the credibility within the community and why. How does one accomplish credibility in a community?
- ⇒ What the community considers being its strengths, assets and legacies.
- ⇒ What have been the significant cross-cultural, cross-group experiences for the group or community? What impact on future relationships do these other experiences have?
- ⇒ What has the community identified as its priority needs and challenges?
- ⇒ What is the diversity that exists within the community?

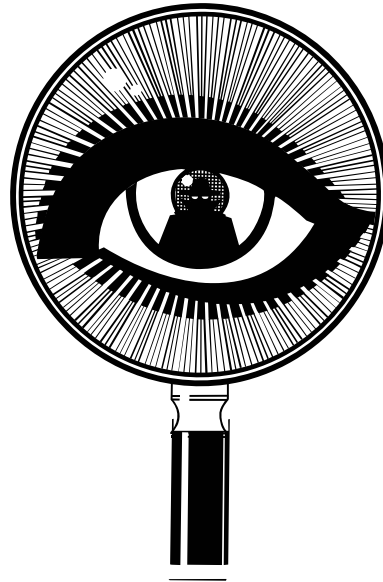
Does Language Matter?

(Source: National Service Inclusion Project, NSIP)

Language often shapes our perception. Using “people first” (“person with a disability”, “person with a visual impairment”) helps remind us and others that people with disabilities are people first, and are more than their disability.

Instead of:	Use:	Because:
The Handicapped	Persons with Disabilities	Handicapped is derived from “cap in hand” and implies that someone is dependent on society
The Disabled	Persons with Disabilities	One is a person before one is disabled
Wheelchair Bound, Confined to a Wheelchair	Uses a Wheelchair or Wheelchair User	A wheelchair is not confining—it allows movement from one place to another
Birth Defect	Congenital Disability	Persons with disabilities are not defective
Crippled	Has a Disability	Crippled comes from Old English “to creep” and is also used as an adjective meaning inferior
Mongoloid	Persons with Downs Syndrome	Mongoloid is a racist term
Mental, Crazy, Psycho, Insane, Nut Case	Person with Mental Illness	There are offensive and negative stereotypes
Normal, Healthy, Whole	Non-Disabled	People with disabilities may also be normal, healthy, whole
Deaf and Dumb, Deaf- Mute	Person who is Deaf or a Person who Does Not Speak	Simply because someone is deaf does not mean they cannot speak, and they are not dumb

WS #4 Reflection Activity:
“My Lens on the World”



Instructions:

1. *Think about the lens or portal you see the world through and identify those things have contributed to the way your lens on the world is constructed.*
2. *Identify these things, or “filters” that have contributed to the way you see the world and list them around the opening.*
3. *Think about the ways your “lens” on your community and world has changed over time – what are some of the things that have shifted your lens over time? What are some of the things your views have shifted most about?*
4. *Why do you think it is so important to get in touch with you own lens and the lenses of others in a conversation about leadership and community building?*
5. **TRIAD SHARING INSTRUCTION** – *when cued to, find two partners and share your “lens” and thoughts.*