

Exploring Origins



**A Culturegram:
Building Blocks for
Contextual Classrooms**

**By McREL Senior Associate Elaine J. C. DeBassige D'Amato,
Native American Liaison**

Facilitation Guidelines:

Building blocks for contextual classrooms

- ✳ This presentation should be used as an:
 - * *introduction to understanding how cultural, mathematics, and science standards can be integrated and used to support one another; and*
 - * *as an opportunity to engage in an activity that introduces cultural diversity and the understanding of cultural influences in classroom learning and participation. The activity is intended to foster a classroom environment that is safe for risk taking, change, and contextual learning.*

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: Summary statement for overall goals and purpose of this presentation.

Please note that the first section of this presentation is intended for personal reflection, professional development for colleagues, or information for parents to understand how students' cultural backgrounds can be used to help them become strong learners.

Part 1 of this presentation gives the teacher and audience background information in order to understand the activity in Part 2.

Part 2 is an assessment of audience/student understanding of culture and its influence on values/learning styles. The audience should be introduced to the differences between culture, ethnicity, and race (slides 9-16), so that the activity becomes a true learning experience and captures their new interpretations of culture. The student audience should be given the opportunity to add to the list of answers from slides 17-19.

Goals

- * Understand the value of integrating cultural understanding into curriculum.
- * Create contextual classrooms for maximum learning.

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To provide goals and a set of expectations for your audience.

Please review the entire presentation and make adjustments for your specific audience. The goals of this presentation may vary from group to group. Please adapt and edit the goals stated to meet your group's needs.

For students, Part 2 is intended to get students to give information about their backgrounds so that the teacher has a better understanding as to how to make problems relevant to their world view. Relevancy is dependent on each person's background. It is contextual and specific for every person; however, there can be a set of shared norms among different cultural groups. For example, a group of teenagers may agree that music is best when it is loud and the bass is adjusted to be the focal point of sound or most military personnel have short haircuts.

These norms can be the basis of stereotypes and generalizations. Stereotypes and generalizations become dangerous when the norm is not adjusted to fit a specific person's value and takes away a person's uniqueness and individual characteristics.

Recipe for change as we know it, Part 1

- ✳ Attend education conference and able to self-reflect and find the warm fuzzies. **Hopeful.**
- ✳ Return to education setting and want to share the warm fuzzies and insights with others. **Inspired and motivated.**
- ✳ Your audience shows up and you can't translate your energy into useful information for others. **Perplexed but still motivated.**
- ✳ No resources or people to reference or support you. **Isolation and loss of inner power.**
- ✳ Slowly old ideas and practices take over. **Defeat.**
- ✳ Return to the next conference. **Repeat.**

Facilitation Guidelines:

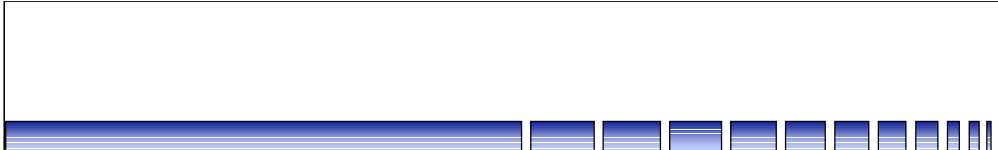
PURPOSE: To show that the entire room has had the experience of hitting a brick wall when trying to change a system.

Ask the question, "How many of you recognize or have been part of this cycle?" Give the participants/students the opportunity to read the entire overhead. When the group has finished reading it, ask again, "How many of you recognize or have been part of this cycle? Please raise your hand and don't hide, we have all been through this in one way or another."

Ask for examples of other situations in which they have failed at change. Allow the group to come up with other parallels to the above example. Diets and a resolution to become organized are good parallels if nobody is willing to start the list. Go through the list with each example given. Using DIET as the example:

1. A person is hopeful that they will lose weight.
2. A person is energized and buys new shoes and begins a support group to start their new program.
3. After the first couple of days or weeks, the person is not quite sure how they are going to continue to integrate their new exercise/good eating habits regime into their everyday life.
4. Between work, family, and other activities, there is no time to return to the support group.
5. On the run, the person stops at a fast food place and does not have time to do the full exercise regime every week.
6. A year later, the person realizes that they have gained the five pounds they lost at the beginning of last year plus another five. They join a health club this time and repeat many of the same things as before.

The critical question here is, "How does one stop this cycle that we know so well and can even predict what will happen next?" Participants can give suggestions or share with the group on how they have changed this cycle in their lives.



The world looks so different after learning science.

For example, trees are made of air, primarily. When they are burned, they go back to air, and in the flaming heat is released the flaming heat of the sun which was bound in to convert the air into tree. And in the ask is the small remnant of the part which did not come from air, that came from the solid earth, instead.

These are beautiful things, and the content of science is wonderfully full of them. They are very inspiring, and they can be used to inspire others.

-From Richard Feynman, the National Science Education Standards.

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To introduce how each of the sets of standards are naturally integrated with the other.

The previous slide used cycles as a way of introducing how difficult it is to implement change. Sometimes change is good and sometimes changes can disrupt a natural flow of organization. In science, there are many cycles that are naturally productive and necessary, such as the one stated above. Mathematics uses natural patterns to help science make meaning of some observations, such as being able to design calendars that match the seasons of certain crops. Culture also has cycles. The cycles are the knowledge that is passed down from one generation to the next, such as ways in which people used “mathematics” and “science” to build houses, to catch enough food to eat, and to design clothing.

Each of these subject areas work in synch with each other, but formal education has taken them apart and disengaged a natural integration of all subject areas. The purpose of the standards is not to hold a student to different sets of standards, but for the educator to find the links between each of the standards to create more meaningful activities and curriculum.

The above quote by Feynman emphasizes the beauty of the natural system. Ask your audience to think about how they have disengaged a natural healthy cycle in their classroom by separating the standards from each other.

Each of the standards set out to help build and support a whole healthy human being through formal education and to create lifelong learners. So why have content areas been separated for so long, and how can educators remedy this inconsistency?

Standards and culture...not like oil and water!

- * NCTM National Standards
- * NRC National Science Education Standards
- * Alaska Cultural Standards for Students, Teachers, Curriculum, Schools, and Community
- * AISES Guidelines for Mathematics, Science, and Technology Programs

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To show that standards and cultural awareness are not exclusive of each other and do not have to remain two separate classroom goals.

Introduce each of the set of standards. You can get the first three sets of standards off of the Internet. The mathematics standards are at www.nctm.org/standard2000/. The national science standards are available at: www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/nses/html/. Finally, the Alaska Native Knowledge Network has developed and made available the cultural standards at www.ankn.uaf.edu/standards.html. The AISES Guidelines for Mathematics, Science and Technology Programs can be ordered through AISES at 303/939-0023.

Note to the audience that we have all of these documents telling us what standards are. Ask them, “What are standards?” They should come up with a few examples. The following is one of the definitions of standard which comes from the American Heritage Dictionary: “A degree or level of requirement.” Use this definition as the basic root of what a standard is.

Standards have been around far longer than any documents in print. Ask the audience if they can remember in their personal life, one of the greatest standards that they have met. The standard does not have to do with formal education. If some people get stuck, you can use riding a bike without training wheels, completing household chores without having to redo them, or building a sand castle that would not be washed away by the water right away.

Make the conclusion, if we have standards growing up, is it not possible that standards have been an important part of life and survival beyond today’s world?

The next slides will review the purpose of each standards document.

A vision of Learning...

- * Students should learn to value _____.
- * Students should learn to reason _____.
- * Students should learn to communicate _____.
- * Students should become confident of their _____ abilities.
- * Students should become _____ problem solvers.

NCTM Executive Summary, pg. 4

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To understand how standards promote learning within the student and how each set of standards strive for the same goals.

Ask the question, “What word would fit into each of the blank spaces? There is a word that can be used for each of these statements.” The audience will shout out many different words. Stop them after a few attempts. The words that we want to use in this example is mathematic(s/al/ally), scientific(ally), diverse (ity/ly). These words correlate with the basic goals of each of the standards documents.

Note that these statements come from the NCTM document but are applicable to all of the content areas.

A vision of teaching...

- ✿ Shift toward _____ communities, instead of separate classrooms.
- ✿ Shift away from the teacher as the sole authority of all knowledge.
- ✿ Shift away from the mere memorization of procedures and information in _____.
- ✿ Shift away from emphasizing the correct answer in _____.
- ✿ Shift away from treating _____ as an isolated body of knowledge and concepts.

NCTM Executive Summary, pg. 4

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To understand how standards promote learning within the student and how each set of standards strive for the same goals.

Repeat the exercise from the previous slide. Ask the question, “What word would fit into each of the blank spaces? There is a word that can be used for each of these statements.” The audience will shout out many different words. Stop them after a few attempts.

The words that we want to use in this example are:

1. Mathematical, scientific, diverse.
2. Note here that the teacher is able to learn different problem-solving techniques and cultural information from the students. It is impossible for the teacher to know specific information about all of the ways to approach a problem or recite specific information about all of the cultures represented in the classroom. This task is beyond the scope of any human being.
3. Mathematics, science and stereotypes.
4. Mathematics, science and one form.
5. Mathematics, science and culture.

These words correlate with the basic goals of each of the standards documents. They all teach the same philosophy of problem solving and removing the blinders that prevent true learning.

Note that these statements come from the NCTM document but are applicable to all of the content areas.

These ideas are also supported by educators who promote Multicultural Mathematics and Science. You can find one of these resources with a reference list at: www.ericse.org/digests/dse96-1.html

Recreating the classroom!

- * Become informed.
- * Bring science to your home and community.
- * Take your commitment to better science education to the next level.
- * Seek out like-minded adults in the community.
- * Involve like-minded teachers.
- * Discuss your ideas with your school's principal.
- * Talk to scientists and engineers.

How to use the NSES to Improve your Child's School Science Program, pg. 21-22

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To show that these standards are giving the teacher a framework and opportunity to recreate a learning environment for **ALL** students.

The cultural standards include sections for students, educators, curriculum, schools, and communities. This document is from the national science document and addresses the same groups of people.

How do you explain and get buy-in from all of these groups? Educational jargon can make standards difficult to understand and takes away the social responsibility of education that standards promote. Audiences who do not regularly deal with standards in an educational context can be intimidated to understand more about them because of the educational jargon that is used to describe them.

One way to help them understand is to explain how standards are part of our lives every day, as mentioned in the previous slides. Another way is to read the attached story, "The People of Maize." There are notes in the margins that help to explain how this story reflects what standards are and what is necessary for their implementation. Standards, like education, must be relevant to the person who is going to buy-in. If the audience does not see the value of standards in their personal life, it will be much more difficult to get them to support the standards movement in your school.

The questions at the end of the story are guidelines and conversation starters for your audience to think about. These questions offer a place to start. Another set of guidelines by Robert J. Marzano from McREL is www.mcrel.org/standards/articles/8-questions-printer.asp

Here's why you should care about culture

- ✿ Culture is the foundation of our lives. If we cannot identify where we belong in the world, then we don't have a place in it.
- ✿ It is something to be proud of.
- ✿ Each of us has a combination of several different cultures that make us unique and special.
- ✿ If you don't care about your culture, no one else will either.

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To show how culture plays an integral part in each person's life and note how critical it is to advocate for a more thorough understanding of exactly what culture is.

Now that we have reviewed what standards are, it is important to define and become familiar with what culture really is and how it is relevant to more than just people of color.

The above list was created by students in a Summer Mathematics and Science Upward Bound Program. When they were asked why they should take interest in how other people interpreted culture, they arrived at the four concepts listed above.

Their understanding of the importance of culture in their personal lives was a profound insight for them. They added that this is one component that is never addressed in schools. They wished that their teachers would take culture into consideration when explaining certain things to them. They noted that they understand in different ways and that if teachers understood or asked where they were "coming from," they believe that they would get more out of their education.

Although they cited these reasons of the importance of culture, they were unable to identify ways or advocates who could help them to realize these various expressions of pride and purpose. This is where the teacher and other educators become a vital link in systemic change.

What do you know about culture?



Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To understand what participants/students understand about culture.

When you ask this question, record the answers of the participants/students on a sheet of paper so that everyone can see the various interpretations of culture.

Explain to your audience that culture is a very misunderstood word and concept. This question will help you to capture previous knowledge and interpretations around this topic. It is important to understand this previous knowledge so that you have a common place to begin with each other. You will have some people who understand culture and some who are not as clear. It is important to know the range of knowledge of your audience. This will also help you to identify people in the group who can be a resource to you later on in the presentation.

By writing everyone's responses, you give credit to their ideas and acknowledge that their input counts. This sets the tone to take risks later on. Make sure that **ALL** participants/students have the opportunity to give an answer. Please respect the right of a person to refrain from answering, but encourage them to give an answer.

Most people will come up with phrases and words like: beliefs, food, religion, family, way of life, historical background, etc. All of these answers are correct. There is almost nothing that can be excluded from the definition of culture.

Race is not culture!

* ...a group of people distinguished by genetically transmitted physical characteristics.

--*The American Heritage Dictionary*

* *Note that this is NOT the most accurate definition that reflects the historical use of race as a distinction of power. It is often seen as a social construct created to separate people and impose oppressive ideals. This should accompany the dictionary definition.*

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To understand how certain words are used incorrectly to define culture.

The purpose of using the dictionary as the “correct” definition is because this is the place where people generally agree on what words mean. This is one of the primary resources that people use to understand the meaning of words that are not clear to them.

Ask your audience if a stranger would know who they are as a person if they were only known to others by this classification system. People will respond that this is not an all-encompassing picture of who they are as a person. This label is only a part of many that come with who they are.

Note that this is where stereotypes begin. People form stereotypes on some of the most basic labels that we attach. People have *schemas* (preconceived ideas) of what Caucasoid or Negroids might be like. It takes more than racial identification to know who a person is.

Race is a physical and scientific classification of people. It has no depth to who a person is and cannot be equated to culture because of this. Race is merely a label. The note at the bottom of the definition is to indicate that some people in the diversity realm say that race was created as an easy way to separate people into socioeconomic classes. Currently, this is a major debate; however, people should be informed that this is a very strong and growing position for some people.

It should also be noted that every person has their own definition of what race is. It might be helpful to go around the room and get an idea from the participants about their definitions. For example, some people may believe that being Jewish is not only a religious group, but a race of its own. The dictionary definition used in this presentation is used to show how limiting its definition is. When people have only one piece of information about a concept, it restricts one’s availability to learn more about the people they encounter.

Ethnicity is not culture!

*...of or relating to sizable groups of people sharing a common and distinctive racial, national, religious, linguistic, or cultural heritage.

--*The American Heritage Dictionary*

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To understand how certain words are used incorrectly to define culture.

Again, the purpose of using the dictionary as the “correct” definition is because this is the place where people generally agree on what words mean. This is one of the primary resources that people use to understand the meaning of words that are not clear to them.

Ask your audience how they would identify someone’s ethnicity if they were not told what it was. Ask them if a stranger would know them as a person if they knew their ethnicity.

Like race, ethnicity is not an ample source of information to really know who a person is. Unlike race, ethnicity provides more information about the person. Most people are associated with an ethnic group through active participation or knowledge of customs and behaviors passed on from previous generations or through personal experiences with that ethnic group.

For example, involved participation and attendance at festivals or religious ceremonies begin to recognize a person as part of that group. Being an American is very different than being a Chilean or Slovakian. The customs, holidays, and belief systems that each group holds as a whole are different from each other and have unique adaptations from holidays that are the same. Different Native American (Ojibwe, Navajo, Athabaskan), and Hispanic/Latino (Mexican, Cuban, Puerto Rican), groups have different languages and customs.

Keep in mind that there is also a term used to describe people at the level they identify with their racial or ethnic group. This development is called Racial Identity Development. This is important to understand as you encounter people from different backgrounds. Some people adhere to the rules and beliefs of a group more than others. For more information, please read Parham, T. A., (April 1989) Cycles of psychological Nigrescence. The Counseling Psychologist, 17(2), 187-226.

Then what exactly is culture?

* The behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions, and all other products of human work and thought, especially as expressed in a particular community or period.

--*The American Heritage Dictionary*

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To understand how culture is an integral piece of information, to establish trust and risk-taking within a group by using personal experiences/definitions to relate to others.

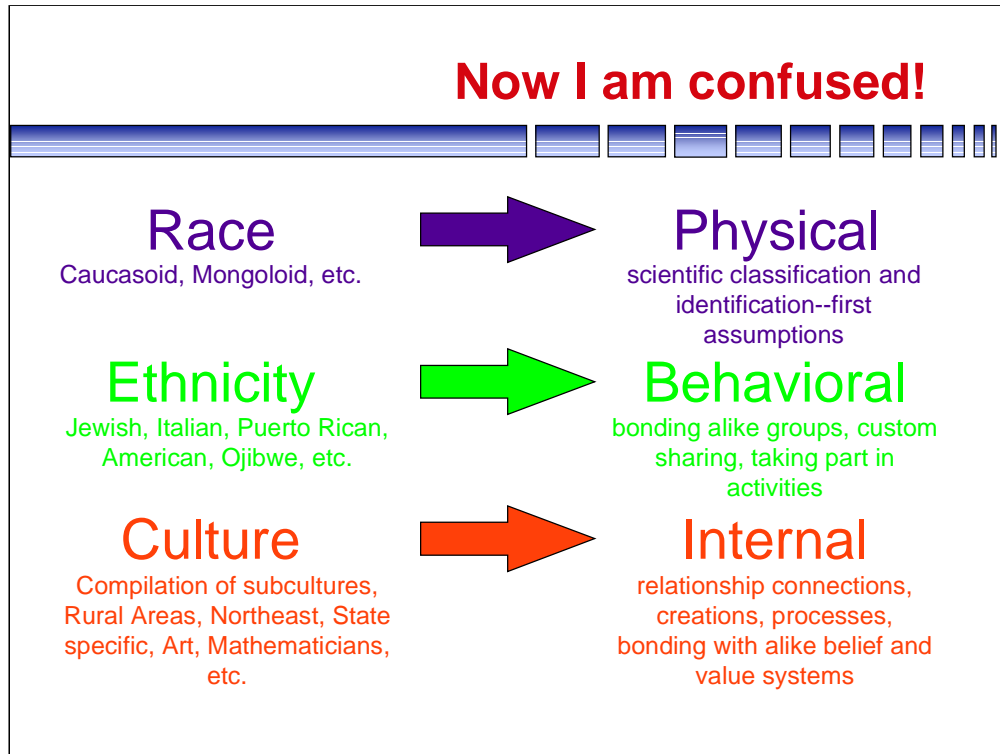
Again, the purpose of using the dictionary as the “correct” definition is because this is the place where people generally agree on what words mean. This is one of the primary resources that people use to understand the meaning of words that are not clear to them.

Ask your audience how they would identify another person’s culture. Can they? Ask them if they know of one word that can describe a person’s culture.

Culture is a very specific strand of every person’s identity that is embedded into one piece of intricate and specific information. Culture is a specific identifier of a person. It cannot be described in a few words because culture is the totality of what a person believes, experiences, and participates in. The dictionary uses a vague descriptor of culture because it cannot be limited to physical or behavioral descriptors as race and ethnicity can. Culture is the lens that a person uses to interpret one’s surroundings, incoming information, and experiences.

In cultural identification, people subscribe to several subcultures to make up an entire picture of how culture looks for each individual person. Each person’s culture is unique unto themselves. A person’s culture cannot be duplicated because of the unique way each person absorbs and integrates new information. This sharing gives the teacher/facilitator additional information about the audience. It also gives a clearer picture of what the audience might be expecting over a period of time.

It is important to understand another person’s culture because it is a different way to observe learning styles and ways that people process new information. Culture has a strong effect on how people encounter the world. A person might be more willing to take risks later on in the classroom/project if their personal and cultural sharing has been honored and respected early on.



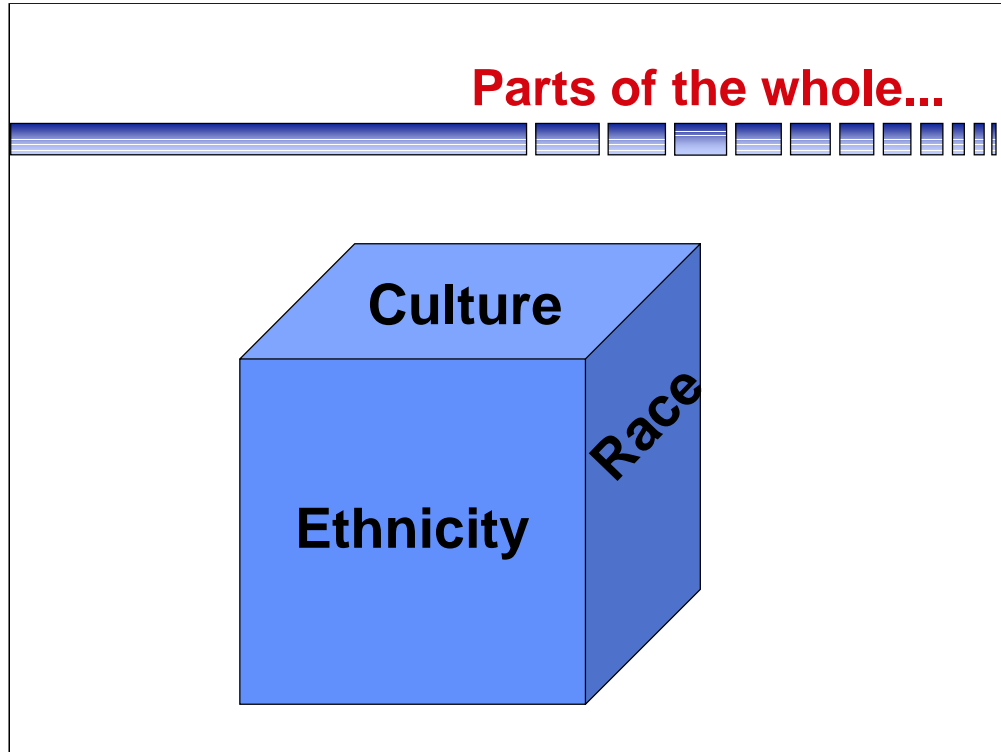
Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To show that race, ethnicity, and culture are not easily understood or explainable words.

Although culture is a very inclusive identifier, it is also the one most personally constructed. People do not have the opportunity to choose their race, and to a large extent their ethnicity. Some parts of ethnicity are chosen, such as the level of participation in events or subscription to ethnic norms. Others parts of ethnicity are not exchangeable, such as being born an Italian American.

However, culture is an ever evolving piece of a person's identity. The choice to emphasize one area of one's life over the other is, for the most part, a personal choice. Culture is a more malleable and adaptable part of life. One can incorporate the lifestyle of a skateboarder and enjoy being a student at an Ivy League school while having grown up in the barrio of East Los Angeles. This combination of cultures creates a unique person. Culture is not isolated.

Whereas race and ethnicity are heavily based on one's physical features and actions, culture focuses more on the internal information processing of a person. Culture is how people represent their ideas, beliefs, traditions, and self.



Facilitation Guidelines:

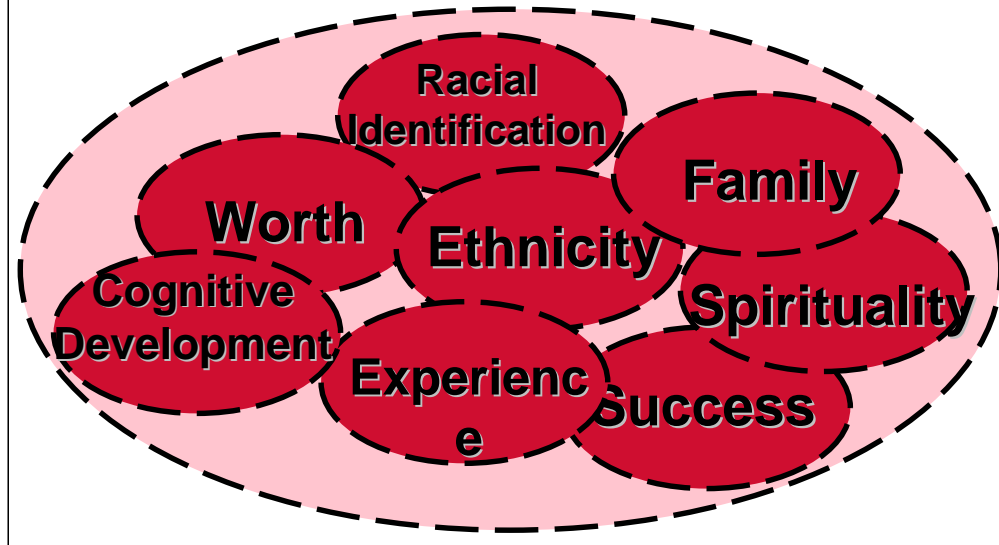
PURPOSE: To show that race, ethnicity, and culture are part of an integrated system.

One way to think about race, ethnicity, and culture is to envision them as one side of a cube. The way that others perceive you to be is the way that they look at the cube.

An activity that can illustrate this better is to create a cube and create two labels of race, ethnicity, and culture. Put the same label on the opposite side so that the same words are on opposite sides of the cube from one another. Ask one person to role the cube and another person to describe what they see. The person may not be able to see the word culture or may have a skewed view of race. If this cube was a person, could this mean that people may not always have an accurate picture or perception of a person unless they really set out to see all facets of a person? Does the person describing the cube vary his or her description when they look at all sides of the cube? Is the description of the cube more accurate if the person takes the time to pick up the cube and investigate all of its sides?

People may have other ways to see how race, ethnicity, and culture are integrated. Ask them to explain the way they see these components working together or acting in isolation from each other.

A contextual perspective of culture...



Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To show that culture is dependent on how a person selects and participates in various parts of systems.

Every person has a culture that is contextual. The context is the way a person chooses or forms the way systems are integrated. A person may not value family, but consider a work ethic as the single most important aspect of who a person is. The many categories under the culture umbrella change with each person.

What other categories might be missing? Is this collection representative of all people? How is it different/similar for each person?

What do kids have to say about culture?

- * Ask us who we are.
- * Don't assume who we are by what we look like or what stereotype we fit.
- * You don't have to understand or believe in our point of view, but you have to respect it if you want me to respect yours and the ones you are trying to teach me.
- * Knowing what culture really means will give me power to teach others more about me. I don't have to hide anymore.

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To understand why it is important to begin to investigate and incorporate culture into classroom activities.

Students are not oblivious to what culture is. In fact, during a classroom presentation of the importance of culture, students cited the above reasons for the inclusion of culture. Culture seemed to be one of the few things over which they had control. When each student was able to share ideas with the other students (who were strangers at the time), they began to take different attitudes with each other. The positions that the students took on their cultural identity was very strong and it was obvious that they took pride in it.

Student recommendations and insights

- ✿ Learn more about the different cultures you belong to—seek elders and other community resources.
- ✿ Be proud of what you know about each part of your life. You have the power to make each part as special as you can.
- ✿ Learn which aspects of your life you have control over and which ones you don't. Try to find a way to balance each aspect.
- ✿ Help other people to understand that race, ethnicity and culture are not the same thing.

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To understand why it is important to begin to investigate and incorporate culture into classroom activities.

The students also had recommendations and insights that they wanted to share with teachers. They wanted to let others know that culture should not be ignored and it would be most beneficial if people started to learn more about others beyond appearances. Students wanted to be understood, listened to, and respected. These needs are basic needs that most people expect from others.

What kids want you to know about them

✳ Ask students to tell you what is most important about themselves, as learners, so that you have a better understanding of how to deliver information. Students should offer ideas about how to help them learn better.

✳ Students should be stakeholders in education. This discussion and exchange activity is intended to develop trust with classmates and the teacher. It also helps to alleviate the stress a student may have with class participation and collaborative/team work.

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To understand the students' role in the classroom from the students' perspective.

The students see themselves as an integral part of their education. Many times they are left out of the decision-making process because they are too young or are not considered experts. Students know when they are being dismissed and their ideas not respected because they are not parallel or a regurgitation of teacher material/words.

Students want to be a part of their learning environment. In the past, they saw themselves as being neglected and disrespected by authorities and educators. For the most part, these students had difficulty identifying more than a couple of people in their schools who saw them as intelligent, capable, or competitive with other students around the country.

Weaving in new approaches begins with you

- ✿ **Begin to ask the hard questions and reflect, assess, and evaluate where you are and what you are doing.**

What is my role in education? What is the role of the learner? What is knowledge? How do people learn? Where are my students at in their learning and cultural identification process?

- ✿ **Look for ways to incorporate student experiences into classroom activities.**

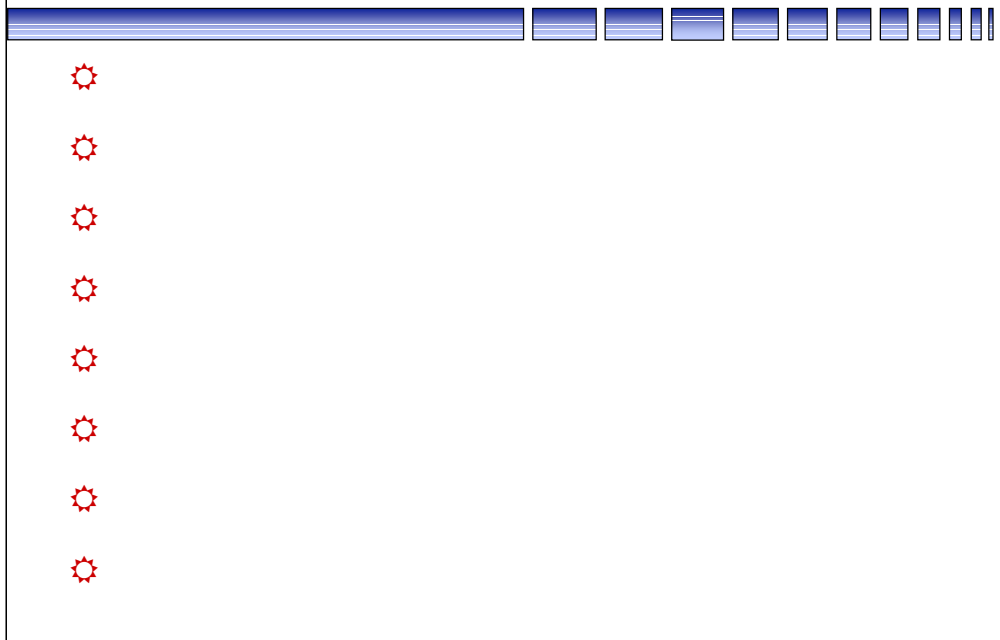
Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To help educators begin to identify starting points that will help them better understand their students .

It is a long road in integrating culture and learning styles into a curriculum and classroom. Some basic questions to begin thinking about are listed above. There are some excellent articles around learning styles and how people process information. Piaget, Vygotsky, Kolb, and Perry have models of the way people process information that is very pertinent to multicultural education.

This is the educator's opportunity to take change into his or her own hands and become proactive.

What are you supposed to do with this now?



A slide template with a blue header bar and a list of eight red gear icons for notes.

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To provide a context and work plan for future goals and tasks.

This part of the presentation is an opportunity for participants to create goals and think of tasks to break the dysfunctional change cycle described in Slide 2. This is also an opportunity to incorporate the social action stage of the model for multicultural education supported by James Banks (Banks, J. A. (1997).

Educating citizens in a multicultural society. Teachers College Press: New York, NY.)

This exercise is particularly useful for groups to prioritize and set goals for social action and to begin changes in the education system.

Ask your audience what they are going to do with this new information. What will some of their goals be to incorporate this information into their classrooms or share with colleagues? Record their responses. Be sure to follow up with the tasks and maintain a timeline.

Culturegram, Part 2

- * Choose four crayons and draw what your culture looks like to you.
- * You will have ten minutes to draw, words are not allowed.
- * We will share the drawings with each other. You have the choice to not show your drawing, but you **MUST** share what is on the paper.

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: Engage audience in an interactive and reflective activity. Encourage the processes of sharing and listening. Honor the presentation, information, and experiences that each person adds to the knowledge base of the group.

Culturegrams are a snapshot of people's belief systems, priorities in life, and understandings of culture. It is a non-coercive way to give people the choice and opportunity to share in more detail about who they are. Because the Culturegram focuses on the drawings that people produce to represent their culture, it becomes an activity that can be used across age groups and abilities. It is not necessarily the pictures that are important, but the explanations of why the pictures are significant and part of the entire drawing.

It is important to set a time limit for the group. You may want to adapt the time constraints based on the age level of your audience. Younger children may need more time.

Setting group norms is essential in assuring equal participation opportunities within the group. At the same time, it is also important to give the participants some level of choice and control. They are in control of what they choose to put down on their paper and respected in their choice to keep their drawings private.

The facilitator of this activity must also draw a Culturegram. It is not fair to ask your audience to take a risk that you are not willing to take.

Processing new information...

- ✦ Acknowledge the risks that each of them is taking by sharing a part of themselves. They are honoring the group by sharing.
- ✦ As participants have shared their Culturegrams, ask one question of them so that they can clarify and expand on ideas/experiences. Keep track of key points made by each participant.
- ✦ When all participants have shared, share your Culturegram.
- ✦ Make the links to each person in the group with the notes that you took.
- ✦ Thank everyone for their participation.

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: A guide to properly process the risk taking and information sharing.

Since this is an activity that explores personal information, it is vital to acknowledge the courage of all participants. It takes a special person to share!

Sit in a circle and draw a picture denoting where people are sitting and leave room next to their names for notes.

The participants should be asked to share their Culturegram. Initially, the group will be hesitant to share. IT IS IMPORTANT FOR THE FACILITATOR NOT TO BE THE FIRST TO SHARE! This is an opportunity for the audience to take leadership and guide themselves. If you have a difficult time with silence and wait time, say to the group, "I don't want to call on some one, so please someone make my job easier and don't make me do something like that." This is said in a joking manner which then usually prompts someone to begin sharing. The average share time for each person is from 3-7 minutes. Give each person ample time to finish thoughts, but do not focus or spend a disproportionate amount of time with one person.

As participants share, jot down notes about what they are presenting to the group. When that person has finished, ask one question about their Culturegram. For example, a person might draw a picture of a pet but not really explain why the pet was important enough to include. Use an open-ended question like, "Tell us why you included your pet. What is important or special about your pet?" This gives the person an opportunity to share on a more personal level without being invaded.

The notes you take on each person gives you the opportunity to see patterns of similarity between people in the group and within the group itself. You will use these notes to make connections within the group when the activity is completed.

What did you learn?

- ✿ Ask participants what they learned by doing the activity and write their responses down for everyone to see.
- ✿ Make a statement about what you learned...remember, teachers are students too!

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: A guide on how to process the experience.

Use a chalkboard or flipchart to record the responses from the first statement. Honor each response given by giving some sort of praise or remark.

Share with your audience what you have gained and learned from this experience. Include as many examples from audience participation as possible.

The responses given by the participants are valuable information to show the audience that you are able to receive information as well as being the conveyor of it.

Nice activity, now what?

✧ Implications and Reflections

- ✧ **Redefinition of culture**
- ✧ **Students become sources of information**
- ✧ **Students become more responsible for their learning**
- ✧ **Educators recapture the opportunity to be creative**
- ✧ **Better class participation, engagement, and risk taking**
- ✧ **Evaluation of current instructional practices**
- ✧ **Professional development to learn about resources and gain a better understanding about what is relevant**
- ✧ **Redefinition of classroom structure and duties**

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: A guide to show some of the benefits and changes the Culturegram promotes.

The most critical source of information that this activity solicits is that from the audience/students. By getting background and more personal information about the students' world, the teacher has more information to work with. Students can be the source of information regarding a piece of their culture that you may not understand. For instance, if you have a student who is blond and blue-eyed, they could be half Native American and you would never know unless you had an opportunity to ask questions about this. Biracial students are a growing minority population that have not been identified as at-risk students in the past. However, these students face issues like trying to find a group that they fit in or being accepted because of their mixed background. Several students may come from divorced families who could then share stories and offer support to one another. Some students may have a gay or lesbian parent and could shed some light on false perceptions. The Culturegram allows students and teachers to see each other as people and begin to understand diversity in the light of respect and not tolerance.

The added resource of student sharing gives the teacher the opportunity to adjust current lessons to become more exciting to their students. For example, a unit on heredity could be seen as a biological family tree of sorts. Students could research family illnesses and understand where they fit. This unit could also address some of the social issues that heredity is a part of. Why do some people have lighter skin, curly hair, or are tall? Student circumstances could be used to further the investigation and understanding of how genetics work. These issues are relevant and personal for each student. When a learner is personally invested in education, he or she takes a greater interest in it. This promotes responsibility within the student and starts a chain reaction of classroom participation.

Finally, the teacher grows in many ways and is able to use more of his or her creativity to approach and teach the various content areas.

Nice activity, so what?

✧ Applications

- ✧ **Begin to incorporate what is important to the students into examples of subjects that may not seem interesting or too complex, like mathematics and science.**
- ✧ **Approach content from a learner-centered perspective.**
- ✧ **Can ask students to come up with examples from their own lives to demonstrate their knowledge of the task. This process allows students to own and construct their knowledge.**

Facilitation Guidelines:

PURPOSE: To introduce additional ways to incorporate student information into classroom activities.

As students become more invested in what they are learning, they also begin to take the initiative in asking questions. This is an opportunity for the teacher to investigate and begin to implement a learner-centered classroom. (Please see Learner-centered psychological principles: Guidelines for school redesign and reform, January 1993 located at <http://www.mcrel.org/products/lcp.asp>).

Furthermore, when a student is able to construct his or her own knowledge and build it upon previous experiences, they will retain and understand the new information better. Wouldn't it be wonderful for students to leave your classroom and apply the information you taught them in their lives outside of the school building? The inquiry, problem-solving, and decision-making skills that you help a student with will be most beneficial and outlive all of the reading material you could possibly assign. (For more information on science and mathematics inquiry, contact your regional Eisenhower Mathematics and Science Consortium.)

Another application is to begin to ask students to demonstrate how a concept you introduce is pertinent and relevant to their lives. Students will begin to understand why they need to learn such skills as persuasive writing if they can see the direct application in their lives. Students might be able to apply their skill by writing a letter/essay to you arguing for one free class for every four weeks of exemplary class work. The students could learn to cite reasons and give examples to support their argument.

Learning how relevancy and student information can work to your benefit is a growing area, beginning as far back as traditional Native American teachings to Piaget to current philosophies of constructivism. Have fun with this activity and learn to enjoy your students and all that they have to offer you!