THE DIVERSITY KIT

An Introductory Resource for Social Change in Education



PART II:

Culture

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The Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory

a program of The Education Alliance at Brown University

The LAB, a program of The Education Alliance at Brown University, is one of ten educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Our goals are to improve teaching and learning, advance school improvement, build capacity for reform, and develop strategic alliances with key members of the region's education and policymaking community.

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Executive Summary

What is culture? How does culture shape identity? What is culturally responsive teaching? How can teachers effectively build upon students' cultural identities to facilitate learning? These are just some of the questions that we address in three separate chapters on culture.

We base these chapters on several principles of culture and learning:

- Students come to school with specific cultural knowledge or "cultural capital," including their particular experiences and prior knowledge.
- Valuing students' cultural knowledge and building upon it is a key component of culturally responsive teaching.
- Culture is largely mediated by language, as manifested in metaphor, storytelling, songs, and greetings.
- A group's culture reflects its shared traditions, which can include a common history, language, religion, customs, and literary traditions.
- Culture is dynamic and ever changing; a group's culture includes the goals, ideals, and beliefs that will ensure the group's survival. However, there are variations among individual members of a cultural group in terms of their beliefs and values.

In the first chapter of this section of *The Diversity Kit,* we focus principally on defining culture and cultural identity. We argue that culture is dynamic and that exploring, valuing, and promoting students' cultures in the classroom will support their personal and academic development. In this first chapter, we explore the notions of collectivism and individualism as cultural orientations, and we examine the power relations that have historically existed between certain societal groups.

In the second chapter we focus our lens more specifically on the area of culture as it impacts teaching and learning among diverse student populations. We ask the readers to participate in activities and the accompanying vignette discussions that encourage them to explore the concept of a learning community. We also challenge educators to explore the funds of knowledge found in students' home communities. Through these exercises we underscore the importance of knowing the students' home cultures and using that knowledge as a resource to enhance student learning.

In the third chapter, we explore the relationship among school, family, and the broader community. The chapter addresses educators' concerns regarding the challenges of involving parents and extended family members in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students. In this chapter, we offer suggestions and provide activities that show how to bridge the gaps among school, family, and the community. We encourage the reader to become a language detective and to explore the culture of the communities in which students live, work, and play. We also encourage developing a curriculum that is culturally responsive and that promotes interaction between students and their families. Ultimately, when teachers and students create a space in which students' languages, cultures, and identities are negotiated and valued, teaching is facilitated and students excel.

Culture is intimately connected to language. For that reason, we suggest that *The Diversity Kit* be used in its entirety to explore the areas of human development and language as additional dimensions of learning. We encourage the reader to explore diversity and all of its richness through *The Diversity Kit* and to challenge social conventions and uneven power relationships that have historically marginalized culturally and linguistically diverse groups.

Overview: Culture, Identity, and Development

GUIDING QUESTIONS

? *What is cultural identity?*

? *How does culture impact development and learning?*

? *How does valuing students' cultures support their development in schools?*

What Is Cultural Identity?

Children begin to develop a sense of identity as individuals and as members of groups from their earliest interactions with others (McAdoo, 1993; Sheets, 1999a). One of the most basic types of identity is ethnic identity, which entails an awareness of one's membership in a social group that has a common culture. The common culture may be marked by a shared language, history, geography, and (frequently) physical characteristics (Fishman, 1989; Sheets, 1999a).

Not all of these aspects need to be shared, however, for people to psychologically identify with a particular ethnic group. Cultural identity is a broader term: people from multiple ethnic backgrounds may identify as belonging to the same culture. For example, in the Caribbean and South America, several ethnic groups may share a broader, common, Latin culture. Social groups existing within one nation may share a common language and a broad cultural identity but have distinct ethnic identities associated with a different language and history. Ethnic groups in the United States are examples of this.

ACTIVITY: Exploring Cultural Identity

With a colleague or in a small group, discuss the following questions:

- *What is your cultural identity? Describe it.*
- *Do you remember a time when you felt a connection with someone who shared your cultural background? Describe that feeling. What made you feel connected to that person?*
- *What kinds of issues related to cultural identity (either your own or your students') have come up for you as a teacher?*

Definitions of Culture and the Invisibility of One's Own Culture

In your discussion with a colleague it is likely that both of you had different ideas about what constitutes culture. Anthropologists and other scholars continue to debate the meaning of this term. García (1994) refers to culture as

> [T]he system of understanding characteristics of that individual's society, or of some subgroup within that society. This system of understanding includes values, beliefs, notions about acceptable and unacceptable behavior, and other socially constructed ideas that members of the society are taught are "true." (p. 51)

Geertz (1973) asserts that members of cultures go about their daily lives within shared webs of meaning. If we link García and Geertz's definitions, we can imagine culture as invisible webs composed of values, beliefs, ideas about appropriate behavior, and socially constructed truths.

One may ask, why is culture made up of invisible webs? Most of the time, our own cultures are invisible to us (Greenfield, Raeff, & Quiroz, 1996; Philips, 1983), yet they are the context within which we operate and make sense of the world. When we encounter a culture that is different from our own, one of the things we are faced with is a set of beliefs that manifest themselves in behaviors that differ from our own. In this way, we often talk about other people's cultures, and not so much about our own. Our own culture is often hidden from us, and we frequently describe it as "the way things are." Nonetheless, one's beliefs and actions are not any more natural or biologically predetermined than any other group's set of beliefs and actions; they have emerged from the ways one's own group has dealt with and interpreted the particular conditions it has faced. As conditions change, so do cultures; thus, cultures are considered to be dynamic.



ACTIVITY: Exploring Values, Beliefs, and Ideas

Think about the values, beliefs, and ideas that are prevalent in your culture. Then, speculate on how those values, beliefs, and ideas may have emerged from the conditions members of your culture faced in the past. Use the table below to record your thoughts.

VALUE, BELIEF, OR IDEA	WHERE IT CAME FROM
EXAMPLE: Education is the most important thing in life.	*Asian Indian parent's experience about how to achieve success in the United States.*

Now, think of some prevalent values, beliefs, and ideas of your culture that are currently being challenged by members of the cultural group. How have conditions changed for members of the group since the old values, beliefs, and ideas were formulated?

HISTORICAL VALUE, BELIEF, OR IDEA	CHALLENGE TO THE VALUE, BELIEF, OR IDEA	CHANGED CONDITIONS THAT MAY HAVE LED TO THE CHALLENGE
EXAMPLE: Parents arrange their children's marriages.	*People should marry for love.*	*Increased education and individual pursuit of work; the feminist movement.*

Individual Differences Within Cultures and the Dynamic Nature of Culture

Individual cultural identity presents yet another layer of complexity. Members of the same culture vary widely in their beliefs and actions. How can we explain this phenomenon? The argument for a "distributive model" of culture addresses the relationship between culture and personality (García, 1994; Schwartz, 1978). This argument posits that individuals select beliefs, values, and ideas that guide their actions from a larger set of cultural beliefs, values, and ideas. In most cases, we do not consciously pick and choose attributes from the total set; rather, the conditions and events in our individual lives lead us to favor some over others. In summarizing Spiro's concept of "cultural heritage," García (1994) draws a distinction between "cultural heritage" and "cultural inheritance." Cultural heritage refers to what society as a whole possesses, and a cultural inheritance is what each individual possesses. In other words, each individual inherits some (but not all) of the cultural heritage of the group.

No two individuals from any culture are exactly alike.

We all have unique identities that we develop within our cultures, but these identities are not fixed or static. This is the reason that stereotypes do not hold up: no two individuals from any culture are exactly alike. While living inside a culture allows members to become familiar with the total cultural heritage of that society, no individual actually internalizes the entire cultural heritage. In fact, it would be impossible for any one person to possess a society's entire cultural heritage; there are inevitably complex and contradictory values, beliefs, and ideas within that heritage, a result of the conditions and events that individuals and groups experience. For example, arranged marriage has long been a cultural practice in India based on the belief that the families of potential spouses best know who would make a desirable match. More and more frequently, however, individuals reject the practice of arranged marriage; this is partly due to the sense of independence from family brought on by both men and women's participation in a rapidly developing job market. The changing experience of work is shifting cultural attitudes towards family and marriage. These different experiences and the new values, beliefs, and ideas they produce contribute to the dynamic nature of culture.

Because individual differences within cultural groups are far greater than differences between cultural groups, it is both particularly crucial and particularly challenging to operationalize understandings of culture and avoid stereotyping in diverse classrooms. To learn about the cultural and individual experiences of students, Hollins (1996) suggests that teachers

- observe and record individual student responses to classroom events or situations,
- develop and administer questionnaires about student beliefs and expectations,
- conduct formal and informal interviews, and
- request life histories and biographies.

ACTIVITY: Personal Cultural History Exercise

(adapted from Okazawa-Rey, 1998)

The purpose of the personal cultural history exercise is to

- *recall and reflect on your earliest and most significant experiences of race, culture, and difference;*
- *think about yourself as a cultural being whose life has been influenced by various historical, social, political, economic, and geographical circumstances; and*
- *make connections between your own experience and those of people different from you.*

This activity may generate a lot of feelings for you and others in your group. Please keep all information confidential (within the group), and do not refer to the specifics of what others have said without their permission after the activity. It will be useful to appoint someone as the group's facilitator.

Using drawings, symbols, and colors, each participant should answer the following questions:

- *What is your racial and ethnic identity?*
- *What is your earliest recollection of someone being included or excluded from your group based on race or culture?*
- *What is your earliest recollection of being different or excluded based on race or culture? Describe a time when your difference made a difference.*

After drawings are complete, share with each other:

- *How it made you feel to think about and answer the questions*
- *How it felt to use a medium most people are unaccustomed to using*
- *The story that your picture tells. (Other group members should be active listeners and may only ask factual questions of the speaker.)*

After sharing your histories, analyze your collective experiences; pay particular attention to geography, historical time period, race, class, gender, religion, language, and other factors. Think about the following questions:

- *What similarities and differences do you notice in your experiences?*
- *What are some of the major forces that shaped your experiences?*
- *How did oppression, discrimination, and prejudice affect your lives?*
- *If your lives were not noticeably affected by discrimination and prejudice, why might this be?*
- *When might you have had an advantage because of your group membership? When were you placed at a disadvantage?*
- *In the United States, what difference does color or race make? Ethnicity? Language background?*

Think about the role schools played in the dynamics of oppression when you were a young person.

- *Can you think of policies or practices that have negative consequences for members of a particular group?*
- *How was what happened in school supported in other institutions?*
- *What strategies did communities, families, and individuals use to resist discrimination and organize on their own behalf?*

Reflect on how your personal experiences with culture and difference shaped your conception of yourself as a professional.

- *How might a person's cultural and racial experiences influence their career path?*
- *Share with a colleague or two some of the ways in which your experiences with culture and difference influenced your career choice.*
- *How have these experiences shaped your views of students who are from racial and cultural groups different from your own?*



Minority Cultural Identity Development

Students who are not members of the dominant group may have difficulty developing their own identity because they are pressured in school (and often, also, in public) to suppress behaviors that mark them as different. A sense of individual and group identity is related to normal emotional and cognitive development, so when this process is interfered with, students are more likely to fail in school (Sheets, 1999b).

Identity is not a neat and tidy concept, nor is it something one person can assign to another (though social attribution of a person's identity can affect him or her—as when people make assumptions about what ethnic group another person belongs to and treat him according to preset expectations). Members of the dominant culture whose identity development is less likely to be interfered with may not understand the complex process of identity development for students from minority or mixed ethnic backgrounds.

VIGNETTE: Supporting Students' Ethnic Identity in School

An urban high school in the Northwest allowed one of its staff members, Dr. Rosa Hernandez Sheets, to conduct a research project. Her plan was to take 27 freshmen who were not doing well in school and put them in a class—a 2-hour language/social studies block—in which they could express their ethnic and cultural identities and develop friendships that would support their academic development. These students, who were Asian (6), African American (10), Biracial (6), and European American (5), could work individually or together in groups of their choosing. They could pursue literature and research topics of interest to them. The role of the teacher was to try to promote a classroom climate in which students could hold open discussions related to their cultural values. The teacher was to place less emphasis on curriculum and more emphasis on strong student participation and positive development of ethnic identity. As a result of this project, the following occurred:

- *Students spoke freely about their personal experiences with race, culture, and ethnicity.*
- *Students chose a range of research topics linked to their own social needs and culture-based knowledge.*
- *Students worked together in same-ethnic/race groups most often (with the biracial students splitting between Asian and African American groups, based on their non-white parent) and produced research reports that were accepted for presentation at the following year's National Association for Multicultural Education.*
- *Nine of twenty-seven students earned honors credit on their academic transcript.*
- *Most received an A as a grade in the course.*
- *Sheets (1999b) observed, however, that the academic success of students did not transfer to their other classes. In those classes, students had a significant number of disciplinary incidents, high levels of absenteeism, and low academic performance.*

DISCUSSION:

- **What are your first thoughts about this scenario?**
- **Why do you think students' success in Dr. Sheets' class did not transfer to their other four classes?**
- **Consider how student identity affects educational success. What might this say about the usual attribution of school failure to low basic skills, home problems, and poverty?**
- **How can we make room in classrooms for students to engage in this kind of personal identity construction?**

The above vignette illustrates some of the complexity of interrelationships among students' backgrounds and sense of self, teachers' attitudes and instructional approaches, and the institution of schooling. Opening up a class in this way seems risky, and most teachers may not feel that they have the skills to manage potential conflicts based on race and ethnicity. Some wouldn't be comfortable with the way students segregated themselves and would regard that outcome as a failure. Yet, there were many positive outcomes in this situation. What became clear was that using students' cultural identities as the point of departure for instructional strategies and curriculum design transforms their performance in school.

How Is Learning Both Social and Cultural?

In the past 15 years, developmental psychology has shifted its focus from individual development in isolation to a focus on how social interactions shape development (Greenfield et al., 1996). The work of Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934), a Russian psychologist whose work was not translated into English until the 1960s, forms the basis of the sociocultural (sometimes referred to as sociohistorical) approach to developmental psychology.

ACTIVITY: Culture and Learning

- *In your opinion, what are some of the strongest influences on the way children learn and develop?*
- *What role do you think culture plays in development and learning?*
- *With regards to culture, what settings and conditions have allowed you to learn best?*

Vygotsky observed that cognitive development is embedded in the context of social relationships (Goldstein, 1999). Thus, interactions between people are the vehicle for intellectual growth. Learning cannot occur in isolation; it is socially mediated. Goldstein (1999) explains Vygotsky's notion of socially mediated knowledge:

> Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)… All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals. (p. 649)

As Moll (1992) notes, "From a Vygotskian perspective…a major role of schooling is to create social contexts for the mastery of and conscious awareness in the use of…cultural tools, such as oral language, literacy, and mathematics" (p. 213). Classroom tasks or activities contain both culture and the individual; that is, the individual's mental processes must grapple with learning concepts or skills the culture deems important. Because social interactions are culturally defined, sociocultural interactions can either facilitate or hinder learning.

We refer to Vygotsky's concept of the "zone of proximal development," or ZPD, in the language section of *The Diversity Kit*. In his volume *Mind and Society,* Vygotsky (1978) defines the ZPD as

> The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (p. 86)

In other words, as students develop cognitively, they take more and more responsibility for increasingly difficult tasks. The challenge for a teacher is to find the developmental zone in which a student can approach a more difficult task with the appropriate amount and type of support. Over time the student begins to take more control over that kind of task (Cole, 1985).

The ZPD has tremendous significance for teaching and learning. When a teacher and student share the same culture, the instructional interaction is simple: an adult

or more skilled peer helps a student master a task through what Rogoff (1990) calls "guided participation." McLaughlin and McLeod (1996) posit similarly that

> Participation in cultural activities with the guidance of more skilled partners enables children to internalize the tools for thinking and for taking more mature approaches to problem solving that are appropriate in their culture. Individual development is mediated by interactions with people who are more skilled in the use of the culture's tools. The development of young children into skilled participants in society is accomplished through children's routine, and often tacit, guided participation in ongoing cultural activities as they observe and participate with others in culturally organized practices. (p. 2)

This dynamic, as Vygotsky notes, is immensely powerful developmentally. But what happens when the teacher and student bring different cultural frames of reference and communication styles to their interaction? Rather than a dialogue or activity that draws students into the "zone of proximal development," there can be a disconnect between the teacher's and student's ways of forming and displaying knowledge. As a result, child-adult interactions in the classroom can fail to advance student learning. Students can, in effect, be stranded developmentally, and teachers can experience frustration when their attempts to engage students in developmental dialogue or activity break down. Cultural differences, then, must be bridged in order to activate powerful developmental dynamics like the ZPD. Teachers who have students from many cultural backgrounds may wonder how they can adjust their teaching to align with the cultural orientations of all of the students. While this is not an easy task, providing instruction that draws on students' ways of knowing will have a positive impact on student learning.



VIGNETTE: Conducting a Critical Ethnography

In a school-university partnership in New York City, Carmen Mercado and her colleagues engaged middle school students of various ethnic and language backgrounds in ethnographic research using an "apprenticeship-enculturation" approach. This approach involved students' observing how adults carry out authentic research activities as they themselves do research (Mercado, 1992). Students chose topics that interested them and that related to the overarching theme of taking action against the undesirable conditions in their community. The university and teacher researchers, while conducting their own research on the academic uses of literacy, assisted students in developing the literacy skills necessary to conduct an ethnographic study. With support, students became experts in tasks such as writing field notes, analyzing data, writing ethnographies, and presenting their work at professional conferences. After the first year of the project, students who had acquired the ethnographic skills and habits of mind necessary for success helped the university and teacher researchers instruct novice sixth- grade ethnographers.

DISCUSSION

- **How does the work of Mercado and her colleagues apply Vygotskian principles?**
- **Why do you think Mercado calls this an "apprenticeship-enculturation" approach?**
- **How could such an approach assist learners from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds?**
- **What do you or could you do as a teacher to try out this theory of learning and teaching?**

VIGNETTE: Making Connections through Dialogue

Christina Igoa, author of *The Inner World of the Immigrant Child* (1995), describes some strategies that she used when she began teaching a group of immigrant fifth and sixth graders. She writes:

Shortly after I got acquainted with the class, I prepared quiet, productive activities on which the children could work individually or in pairs without my direct participation. I trained two to four mature students to be student teachers who could answer questions or clarify directions.

As I looked across the room at the global reality of children from all corners of the world, I knew I needed to find out where they came from so I could prepare the curriculum. As the children worked quietly, I met with each student for a one-on-one dialogue. It was a profoundly rich experience.

At the university level it is often a given for students to meet individually with professors to clarify mutual expectations, discuss academic concerns, and bring up matters that might affect the attainment of goals. In our classroom, such dialogues gave the children the opportunity to express themselves; and the dialogues became an important methodology in working with the students. Through the dialogues I found a way of connecting with each child as a unique individual, validating the child's cultural history, and establishing a trusting, respectful, and warm relationship.

I set up a little "office space" around my desk and met with each student for about 15 minutes. During the dialogue, I inquired into the style of teaching and method of learning used in the child's country of origin…

For those who preferred to remain silent, I entered the silent stage with them by respecting the child and waiting. If there was resistance, if the child wasn't ready to talk, we spent time together quietly in order to establish trust and warmth. I spoke very directly to the child and tried to find out what I could

do to make it safe for the child to speak to me. I felt that if I could figure out what the child was feeling, I could understand his or her behavior. (pp. 125-126)

DISCUSSION

- **What kinds of questions do you think Igoa asked her students during her conferences with them? What kinds of questions do you think you would ask your students?**
- **In what ways was one-on-one dialogue between Igoa and her students an essential part of teaching and learning in her class?**
- **What are some ways that Igoa might use the information she gathered about teaching and learning in students' home countries to assist them in their development?**
- **How can Vygotsky's theory of ZPD and the role of culture in learning be applied to the vignette?**

How Does Valuing Students' Cultures Support Their Development in Schools?

Cultural Value Orientations: Collectivism and Individualism

Cultural value orientations have an enormous impact on learning in schools (Greenfield et al., 1996; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, & Greenfield, 2000; Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). Current research on cultural value orientations and learning in school reveals that schooling becomes problematic when students from collectivist cultures encounter the individualistic culture of U.S. schools and classrooms. Trumbull et al. (2001) explain that "(t)he continuum of 'individualism-collectivism' represents the degree to which a culture emphasizes individual fulfillment and choice versus interdependent relationships, social responsibility, and the well-being of the group. Individualism makes the former the priority, collectivism the latter." (p. 19)

ACTIVITY: Valuing Culture

- *What do you think it looks like for teachers to value students' home cultures?*
- *How has your own culture been valued or devalued in school? At work?*
- *How might cultural power relationships affect student performance? Teacher attitudes?*



It is important to emphasize that cultures and individuals vary in the degree to which they are collectivist or individualist, but that, generally, an individualist orientation among students is the norm in many U.S. classrooms. Among world cultures, collectivist orientation to culture is often found among Native Americans, Latin Americans, Africans, and Asians (Greenfield et al., 1996). African American culture has been described as more collectivist than the dominant U.S. culture in terms of family orientation and kinship help but more individualistic than many other cultures in terms of its emphasis on individual achievement (Hollins, 1996).

Like other belief systems that undergird cultures, individualism and collectivism are often invisible to the people who live within those respective "webs of meaning." A member of a collectivist culture probably goes about her daily business without consciously thinking, "I'm helping my brother with his homework because we have a network of interdependent relationships within my collectivist culture." A member of an individualist culture likely doesn't stop to reflect, "I am striving to get all A's in my classes because in my individualist culture we value personal achievement over all else." Members of cultures, on the whole, do not consider the overarching frameworks within which they live their lives; they simply live. However, as we discussed earlier, when cultures come into contact, people quickly recognize that different values, beliefs, and ideas have come into play, even when they are unsure what those values, beliefs, and ideas are.

When students with a collectivist orientation are forced to conform to individualistic modes of learning, there is a cultural mismatch, and the result is often frustration and failure for teachers, students, and families. Likewise, when school personnel with individualist mindsets and families with collectivist mindsets attempt to interact in a school setting, negotiating meaning and intent can be difficult, as we see in the vignette on page 24.

VIGNETTE: Mismatches in Cultural Expectations

In a linguistically diverse, urban neighborhood, parents (and their preschool children) remained with their elementary school children during the school's morning breakfast program. During that time, the students shared their food with their family members. However, school administrators and teachers felt that the parents were taking advantage of the subsidized breakfast program. Stating that parents were violating federal and district guidelines, administrators decided to close the school doors to the parents in the mornings. Parents protested the action, and teachers felt that the breakfast incident was another example of the school's failure to foster parental involvement.

DISCUSSION

- **Analyze the vignette above in light of the information on collectivism and individualism. What beliefs might the parents have had that led to their decision to stay at school and eat breakfast with their children?**
- **What beliefs might have guided the administrators when they prohibited the parents and siblings from eating breakfast with their school-aged children?**
- **How did the school personnel and the parents judge each other?**
- **How might the situation have been dealt with differently by school personnel, taking cultural value orientations into account?**

Trumbull et al. (2001) contrast individualism and collectivism as they may play out in school settings. The following table draws from their work with immigrant Latino families. Keep in mind that cultures, and individuals within cultures, will vary in terms of where they fall on the collectivist-individualist continuum, so their perspectives on schooling will vary as well.

TABLE 1

INDIVIDUALIST PERSPECTIVE	COLLECTIVIST PERSPECTIVE
Student should "achieve her potential" for the sake of self-fulfillment.	*Student should "achieve her potential" in order to contribute to the social whole.*
Student should work independently and get his own work done. Giving help to others may be considered cheating.	*Student should be helpful and cooperate with his peers, giving assistance when needed. Helping is not considered cheating.*
Student should be praised frequently. The positive should be emphasized whenever possible.	*Student should not be singled out for praise in front of her peers. Positive feedback should be stated in terms of student's ability to help family or community.*
Student should attain intellectual skills in school; education as schooling.	*Student should learn appropriate social behaviors and skills as well as intellectual skills; education as up-bringing.*
Student should engage in discussion and argument in order to learn to think critically (constructivist model).	*Student should be quiet and respectful in class because he will learn more this way (transmission model).*
Property belongs to individuals, and others must ask to borrow or share it.	*Most property is communal and not considered the domain of an individual.*
Teacher manages behavior indirectly or emphasizes student self-control.	*Teacher has primary authority for managing behavior, but also expects peers to guide each other's behavior.*
Parent is integrally involved with student's academic progress.	*Parent believes that it is teacher's role to provide academic instruction to student.*

ACTIVITY: Exploring Individualist and Collectivist Orientations

Read TABLE 1 on page 25. Then, discuss the following questions:

- *What makes sense to you about the expectations in the "Individualist Perspective" column?*
- *What makes sense to you about the expectations in the "Collectivist Perspective" column?*
- *Elaborate on some of the expectations and explain why you agree or disagree with them as a teacher. What factors from your own cultural background might influence your opinions?*
- *What kinds of conflicts might occur in a classroom because of these different cultural values? How might you deal with such conflicts? What might you do in your classroom to allow for different cultural values?*

Historical Power Relations and Their Impact on Development and Learning

Greenfield et al. (1996) and Bartolomé (1995) draw our attention to another key variable in minority child development and learning: the historical power relationships between dominant and non-dominant cultural groups. Frequently, Asian Americans have been touted as the "model minority." That is, as an undifferentiated group Asian Americans have not experienced the widespread school failure commonly observed among Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and Native Americans. Ogbu (1994) offers a distinction between voluntary and involuntary minorities. Voluntary minorities are those who freely immigrate to the U.S., such as Asian Americans. Involuntary minorities are those who have been conquered, colonized, or subjugated by the U.S., such as Mexican Americans, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and Native Americans. There is a clear parallel between those groups that are involuntary minorities and resulting school failure. For involuntary minorities, participation in public institutions (like schools) that value the culture of the dominant group may result in further loss of culture, language, and power. Thus, in the case of involuntary minorities, it is of utmost importance to create a climate that values students' cultures and that follows culturally responsive pedagogy. Villegas (1991) elaborates:

> A culturally responsive pedagogy builds on the premise that how people are expected to go about learning may differ across cultures…Cultural differences present both challenges and opportunities for teachers. To maximize learning opportunities, teachers must gain knowledge of the cultures represented in their classrooms, then translate this knowledge into instructional practice. (p. 13)

Bartolomé (1995) proposes that culturally responsive pedagogy alone is not enough to mediate the effect of historical inequity on involuntary minorities. Bartolomé emphasizes that methods by themselves do not suffice to advance the learning of involuntary minorities. She advocates what she calls "humanizing pedagogy," in which a teacher "values the students' background knowledge, culture, and life experiences and creates contexts in which power is shared by students and teachers" (p. 55). This power sharing and valuing of students' lives and cultures may provide a positive counterforce to the negative sociocultural experiences of students; it can enable them to see themselves as empowered within the context of school and allow them to retain pride in their cultural heritages.

VIGNETTE: Letter from Kai James (1998)

Kai James was a freshman in high school when he wrote the following letter.

"Dear High School Teacher"

I am a new high school student and I am looking forward to these next years of my schooling. I feel the need to write this letter because I seek a different experience in high school from that of elementary school. One of the things I would like to see changed is the relationship between students and teachers. I feel that a relationship that places students on the same level as teachers should be established. By this I mean that students' opinions should be taken seriously and be valued as much as those of teachers, and that together with the teachers we can shape the way we learn and what we learn...

After years of being ignored, what the students need, and in particular what black students need, is a curriculum that we can relate to and that will interest us. We need appropriate curriculum to motivate us to the best we can be. We need to be taught to have a voice and have teachers who will listen to us with an open mind and not dismiss our ideas simply because they differ from what they have been told in the past. We need to be made aware of all our options in life. We need to have time to discuss issues of concern to the students as well as the teachers. We must be able to talk about racism without running away from it or disguising the issue. We must also be taught to recognize racism instead of denying it and then referring to those who have recognized it as "paranoid." We also need to be given the opportunity to influence our education and, in turn, our destinies.

We should also be given the right to assemble and discuss issues without having a teacher present to discourage us from saying what we need to say. Teachers must gain the trust of their students, and students must be given

the chance to trust their teachers. We need teachers who will not punish us just because they feel hostile or angry. We need teachers who will allow us to practice our culture without being ridiculed ... (pp. 109-110)

DISCUSSION

- **What is Kai James asking teachers to do?**
- **What do you think James' experiences as an African American student have been like in school?**
- **Why do you think changing the power structure of schools is important to him?**
- **After reading this letter, what new thoughts do you have about cultural identity, development, and learning?**

In this section we have explored the concepts of culture and cultural identity. We have discussed how notions of cultural identity affect minority student populations, how culture impacts students' learning, and how an understanding of students' cultures can inform teachers' instructional strategies. We have advocated a culturally responsive pedagogy that values students' funds of knowledge, including their culture, language, and experiences. Culturally responsive pedagogy and curricula incorporate that knowledge into the learning process. In the following section of *The Diversity Kit* we expand upon the areas of culture, teaching, and learning more fully.

Culture, Teaching, and Learning

GUIDING QUESTIONS

? *How are high expectations especially critical for culturally and linguistically diverse learners?*

? *How can teachers learn about students' home cultures?*

? *How can teachers use their understanding of students' home cultures to teach in culturally relevant ways?*

It is important for all students that schooling become linked with their worlds and experiences in significant ways. For students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, this often does not occur, and the overt consequences can be tragic, including high absenteeism, poor performance on standardized testing, failing grades, and high dropout rates. Most important, students are denied an opportunity to learn. This forecloses important life opportunities for large portions of our student populations.

"I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience . . ."
(Dewey, 1938)

How Are High Expectations Especially Critical for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners?

Gay (2000) suggests that test scores, grade-point averages, course enrollments, and other indicators of school achievement are symptoms, not causes, of problems for students of color. In fact, there are many other indicators of school success or failure. Ultimately, school failure is what students of color experience, but it is not their identity or net worth.

The current standards-based reform movement demands that *all* students gain proficiency in specific skills and content areas. Before standards, two levels of practice existed. One level provided for basic skill development for all learners. The other level accommodated college-bound students with higher order skill development. Standards promote the belief that all children can learn at high levels given appropriate time and resources. While there is a small but growing body of research regarding the problems and promises of standards-based reform for culturally and linguistically diverse students, it has become clear from results in many states with new standards and assessements that large percentages of culturally and linguistically diverse students are not being adequately prepared in school. This highlights the need to transform

schooling for diverse learners in ways that will ensure their academic progress and success. On the most basic level, teachers must now refocus their beliefs about culturally and linguistically diverse students, transforming low expectations to high expectations.

When teachers form low expectations of students based on a perceived lack of intellect or cultural sophistication, these expectations become a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, and student performance falls (Villegas, 1991). This ill-informed notion, also known as the "cultural deficit theory," assumes that some students cannot achieve because of their culture, ethnicity, language, or race.

The notion of the minority student who "doesn't care" is all too often a misconception of both dominant and minority teachers, who have assimilated the values of the dominant culture through their schooling (Delpit, 1995). It conveniently attributes a student's struggles to the student, her family, and her community, leaving school structures and teacher practices unscrutinized. While specific communication breakdowns may heighten teachers' stereotyped beliefs regarding students' home cultures, the views found in the classroom generally mirror the pervasive prejudice towards minority groups that is often found in the dominant culture. Educators' views of minority and poor students' home cultures as culturally and intellectually deficient have resulted in great harm to a large number of students. Cultural deficit theory has had far-reaching ramifications in classrooms and schools (Delpit, 1995; Villegas, 1991).

"A child cannot be taught by anyone whose demand, essentially, is that the child repudiate his experience and all that gives him sustenance and enter into a limbo in which he will no longer be black" (James Baldwin cited in Gay, 2000, p. 85).

"A child cannot be taught by anyone whose demand, essentially, is that the child repudiate his experience and all that gives him sustenance and enter into a limbo in which he will no longer be black."

James Baldwin
(cited in Gay, 2000, p. 85)

ACTIVITY: Honoring Cultural Identity

In her book *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice,* Geneva Gay (2000) quotes James Baldwin, who informs us of the importance of recognizing and valuing students' language and culture in a way that honors students' personal identities.

Reflect on the Baldwin quotation on page 33 and discuss the following questions.

- *What do you think Baldwin means by "repudiate his experience and all that gives him sustenance"? How might this occur in a classroom?*
- *What does "enter into a limbo in which he will no longer be black" mean?*
- *What other identities might substitute for black in the setting in which you work?*
- *What parts of the teaching and learning process might diminish instead of build on what students bring with them from home to school?*

VIGNETTE: Challenging Cultural Assumptions: Mr. Stivale

Recently, a faculty meeting was held in a middle school in a small city with a large population of students from Puerto Rico. One of the participants at the meeting, Mr. Stivale, has been a math and technology teacher for about 20 years. Mr. Stivale regularly makes comments to Puerto Rican students such as, "I bet you never saw a computer until you came to the United States," and "I know you have trouble with English, so let's see if someone can translate this into Puerto Rican." At one point during the meeting Mr. Stivale asserted that "some of these kids [referring to the Puerto Rican students] just don't want to learn, and you can't make them. I'm not interested in them." He then looked around the table, assuming that other participants would be in agreement. Other participants looked uncomfortable, but no one challenged his statement.

DISCUSSION

- **How do you think Mr. Stivale's cultural deficit approach impacts students?**
- **What kind of information do you think Mr. Stivale needs in order to change his approach?**
- **Why do you think no one challenged Mr. Stivale's statements at the faculty meeting?**
- **As a colleague of Mr. Stivale's, how might you have responded?**

It is likely that Mr. Stivale would claim that he treats all students fairly. Upon observing his class, however, it became clear that Mr. Stivale communicated his belief that Puerto Rican students, many of whom come from working-class families, have a cultural deficit. This teacher's beliefs and lack of knowledge about students' cultures translated into overt disrespect for students and their cultures. We might consider this a kind of worst-case scenario but not an uncommon one.

Cultural deficit assumptions often appear more subtly as well. Many well-intentioned teachers seek to assist low-performing minority and ELL students by making the curriculum less cognitively challenging so that students can "get it." Sometimes teachers assume that culturally diverse and poor students don't have the cultural prerequisites teachers view as precursors to higher order thinking. For example, often a teacher who has students from backgrounds that do not privilege literacy will assume that students will be unable to process sophisticated narrative structures in texts. The teacher thus places these students into "lower" reading groups.

Official and informal ability grouping and tracking communicates to students the teacher's belief that they are not intelligent enough to succeed academically. This assumption is dangerous for several reasons. First, it does not consider that such students may come from home cultures with highly complex oral traditions—traditions that might, in fact, make them better able to relate to complex narrations within texts (Delpit, 1995). Second, it ignores the mission promised by standards-based reform to ensure high academic achievement for all students. Third, and most fundamental, it exemplifies the hazardous but common practice of substituting suppositions (or prejudices) for knowledge about students' and families' circumstances. This results in limited opportunities after high school (Anyon, 1981; Delpit, 1995). Gay (2000) notes that students of color, especially in poor and urban areas, receive less instructional attention. They are also

- called on less frequently,
- praised less often,
- reprimanded more often and punished more severely,
- given answers more frequently by teachers,
- not encouraged to develop higher order thinking,
- not encouraged to elaborate on statements,
- rewarded for following rules and regulations and for being "nice".

The self-fulfilling prophecy referred to earlier holds true in the other direction as well; when educators hold out high standards to students while simultaneously communicating a respect for their home cultures, student performance increases. In addition, Gay (2000) reports that caring relationships have the following qualities:

- patience
- persistence
- facilitation
- validation
- empowerment for participants

Uncaring relationships, on the other hand, are characterized by

- impatience
- intolerance
- dictations
- control

Caring teachers hold students accountable for high-quality academic, social, and personal performance and ensure that this can happen. Kleinfeld refers to these teachers as "warm demanders" (in Gay, 2000, p. 50).

VIGNETTE: Constructing a Community of Learners: Mr. Díaz

On Thursday mornings, each child in Mr. Raphael Díaz's fourth-grade class at the Alfred Lima Sr., Elementary School has an adult mentor all to him- or herself. Mr. Díaz has set up the mentor-student pairs in collaboration with a professor of teachers-in-training at a local college. For the next hour, the 23 students in this Spanish, bilingual classroom engage with their mentors in a variety of reading, writing, and conversation activities in English. For the remaining 4 hours of the school day, the class maintains its high level of enthusiasm, with one change: the focus of their engagement shifts to their teacher, Mr. Díaz, who is proficient in both Spanish and English.

The principles of culturally responsive teaching abound in Mr. Díaz's teaching practice. Perhaps the best example of his practice is the efficacy with which he communicates high expectations to each student. This message is personalized for individual students at every opportunity. Mr. Díaz might remark, "Ricky, in a couple of years you will come back and teach me," or "You see, Alexi? You are doing so well on your own, pretty soon you won't need me anymore," or "Ashley, you know so much about this topic, soon you'll be able to write a book about it."

In much of his teaching, Mr. Díaz serves as mediator, encouraging his fourth-grade students to become independent learners. For instance, in math classes, rather than simply giving them set problems to learn, he encourages students to identify and analyze the data presented in problems. He asks them to frame relevant questions and to determine appropriate tasks and their sequence. In this way, students learn to express themselves in an environment of academic discourse. Trained to make their own choices, they are then encouraged to defend these choices to their peers. After a reading activity, students write in their journals and then share their thoughts by presenting them to the whole class. In a similar manner, during math class, students are required to show their work and explain the process to others. This creates an

ethic of sharing and responsibility, promoting Mr. Díaz's belief that learning is a serious endeavor with many rewards and demands.

The students have a constant stream of support in their teacher. Born in Cuba, Mr. Díaz attended New York City public schools. Now a successful artist as well as a teacher, he knows firsthand the strengths and gifts his students bring to school and what it takes to succeed, both in school and in the world. His ongoing message of respect and belief in his students is heard and respected in turn because students know that this message is informed and comes from the heart.

"What is the one thing you remember most about the Dominican Republic?" Mr. Díaz asks a girl who has just read a journal entry about what she did over the weekend. Several times during the day, Mr. Díaz asks similar questions about home or country, demonstrating not only a personal awareness of each student's cultural origin but also an understanding that each student carries his/her home and homeland with him/her throughout the day. These are elements of a student's situational past, of present academic and social development, and of future potential.

Mr. Díaz's classroom is wealthy by many standards. Sun pours through many windows lining two walls of the large, corner room. More than 30 posters on the walls and over 100 books in the classroom library reflect a wide diversity of cultures, ages, periods of history, and interests. Art supplies, computers, containers for tools, and completed work all make it possible for students and teacher to do the job they are asked to do. But resources do not come easily. Mr. Díaz writes proposals for books and materials to supplement those provided by the school.

Mr. Díaz joins with his students in constructing a community of learners in his classroom. Together, they shape the classroom into an inspiring home for learning and create a space in which Spanish, English, and a wide range of cultural heritages are named and respected. They also share what they do

well, offering to inform the community of educators about the wealth of diversity in their school community (Knowledgeloom, 2001).

DISCUSSION

- **What makes Mr. Díaz a "warm demander"?**
- **What does Mr. Díaz do to convey high expectations to students?**
- **What strategies does Mr. Díaz use to engage his students and foster academic growth? What kinds of higher order thinking does he require of students?**
- **How does Mr. Díaz affirm and incorporate students' home cultures in the classroom? How do you think this might affect student learning?**
- **How can setting high expectations and affirming and incorporating students' home cultures work to improve student outcomes?**

Gay (2000) notes five strong trends in teacher expectations:

- Teacher expectations significantly influence the quality of students' learning opportunities.
- Teacher expectations are affected by factors that have no basis in reality and may persist in the face of contrary evidence.
- There are pervasive expectations about intellectual capacity based on ethnicity and gender of students; these lead to the self-fulfilling prophecy phenomenon.
- There are higher, universal, academic achievement expectations for European-American students than for students of color, except for some Asian American students.
- Teachers' expectations for students and their sense of professional efficacy are interrelated. Teachers who have low expectations for students do not feel confident they can teach those students, and as a result attribute students' failure to lack of intellect and deficient home lives. Teachers with strong self-confidence and feelings of efficacy in their teaching abilities have high expectations for all students.

How Can Teachers Learn about Students' Home Cultures?

It stands to reason that teachers need to know the values, practices, and learning styles of the cultural groups from which their students come. However, Zeichner (1996) warns that generalized studies about cultures can lead to stereotypes. Thus, it is best not to engage solely in text-based research about students' cultures. The alternative is to engage in amateur ethnographic inquiry about one's own students (Heath, 1983).

Briefly, ethnography refers to the systematic inquiry into how members of a group make meaning of the world. What constitutes a "good job," an "important tradition," the "responsibilities of a daughter," or even the "value of homework" in a student's domestic priorities can all be investigated ethnographically. Ethnography conducted in sufficient detail should illustrate not only cultural trends but intracultural differences. That is, not everyone within a culture has the same views on a given topic or

has exactly the same habits. Villegas (1993) offers these methods of collecting information:

- Home visits
- Conversations with community members
- Consultations with other teachers
- Observations of students in and out of school

In addition, an ethnographic investigation would also include conversations with the students.

One source for better understanding the students' culture is household "funds of knowledge." "Funds of knowledge" is the term researchers use to include (1) information, (2) processes of thinking and learning, and (3) useful skills associated with a community's normal life (Leighton, Hightower, Wrigley, 1995). All three of these elements must be understood in relation to specific, diverse, sociocultural practices. Believing that students of Mexican origin possess specific "funds of knowledge," researchers Luis Moll, Norma González, and their colleagues helped Arizona teachers make connections between these students' school and homes. These connections resulted in teachers gaining access to information that helped them make academic material more relevant to students (Moll, 1992; McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996). Their work had two goals: (1) to form relationships among home, teachers, and school by tapping into the family's strengths and (2) to allow the teacher to learn about the family's funds of knowledge so that the information could be used as a resource and complement to classroom curriculum (González, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzales, & Amanti, 1993; Shartrand, Weiss, Kreider, & Lopez, 1997).

"Funds of knowledge" expresses the belief that students bring valuable home knowledge to the learning environment. In addition, what students bring may differ according to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds and their individual circumstances. This gives teachers the opportunity to consider how students learn to construct knowledge in social contexts. In many instances, schools and teachers are not aware of the abundant knowledge that families have or that this

"Funds of knowledge" expresses the belief that students bring valuable home knowledge to the learning environment.

knowledge can be incorporated in order to teach academic skills. Funds of knowledge, then, refers to understanding, discovering, and appreciating the many cultural practices of students and their families. Consider the following example of how teachers used the knowledge acquired from home visits.

VIGNETTE: Funds of Knowledge—Learning about the Community

(adapted from McLaughlin & McLeod, 1996)

Teachers visited students' homes as if they were anthropologists, gaining an understanding of their Latino students' cultural backgrounds as well as gathering material for their curriculum. One teacher drew on the expertise of parents employed in construction occupations to create a mathematics curriculum based on building a house. Another found that many of her students' families had extensive knowledge of the medicinal value of plants and herbs, so she taught scientific concepts in that context. Still another based a curriculum unit on the discovery that some students regularly returned from Mexico with candy to sell. Students investigated the economics of marketing, compared Mexican and American candy, did a nutritional analysis of candy, studied the process of sugar processing, and conducted a survey on favorite candies, for which they graphed data and wrote a report.

The example on page 43 illustrates how teachers used cultural knowledge not simply to talk about superficial things like foods, clothes, and holidays but to develop classroom practice. These findings and understandings led to in-depth information about the accumulated bodies of knowledge in the various households (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992).

Discovering students' funds of knowledge entails finding out and understanding the social history of the households—their sources, evolution, and most important, their work history. For example, some children from migrant families might possess knowledge about farming or agriculture (a domain of knowledge) because that is what their parents do for a living. These students would have knowledge of crop planting and harvesting. Moll (1992) observed that families had material and scientific knowledge about carpentry, masonry, electrical wiring, fencing, and building codes, just to name a few areas.

Traditionally, teachers have made home visits for several reasons: to discuss a student's behavior or problems with subject areas or to provide information on how parents can help the student at home. In the funds of knowledge approach, home visits have a different purpose. Teachers develop skills in observing and interviewing before they do home visits; they participate in study groups, reflect on their journals or field notes after home visits, and then use what they have learned to build and enhance their curriculum. The aim is to identify and document knowledge that exists in the student and use that knowledge to develop, transform, and enrich classroom practice (González et al., 1993). Teachers implementing the model may initially be reluctant to visit their students' homes and to report their observations as a researcher. But as they become familiar with the process, teachers begin to see that the effort is worthwhile. In addition, when visits and ethnographic reflection are connected, they bring about significant changes not only in teachers but in all parties involved (González et al., 1993). The example on page 43 illustrates how one teacher discovered the resources within her students' families and how she became a learner in the process.



VIGNETTE: From Martha Floyd-Tenery, Bilingual Resource Teacher

As I reread some of the early journal entries I made for this project, I realize how I have changed my views of the household. As I read these entries, I realize that I had discussed my students in terms of low academics, home-life problems, alienation, and SES [socioeconomic status], and that I was oriented towards a deficit model. I no longer see the families I visited that way. Since I am looking for resources, I am finding resources, and I recognize the members of the families for who they are and for their talents and unique personalities. We now have a reciprocal relationship where we exchange goods, services, and information. I have also discarded many myths that are prevalent in our region and that I myself used to believe.

DISCUSSION

- **What are some myths related to the education, values, and responsibilities of diverse students? How might these myths be reflected in your teaching?**
- **Short of being personally involved in a collaborative ethnographic analysis of the household dynamics of all your students, what could you do to improve your knowledge of your students' worlds?**
- **To what extent would you incorporate funds of knowledge in your classroom? What benefits do you think your non-minority students would receive?**

How Can Teachers Use Their Understanding of Students' Home Cultures to Teach in Culturally Relevant Ways?

Curriculum and instruction that attempt to build on students' cultural knowledge are part of what is called "culturally responsive pedagogy" (Bartolomé, 1995; Villegas, 1991). When culturally responsive teaching occurs, students' home cultures and experiences are drawn upon as resources for teaching and learning instead of being viewed as barriers to education. The importance of understanding students' particular cultural backgrounds and skills was elaborated upon in our discussion about funds of knowledge.

Ladson-Billings (1995) extends the concept of culturally responsive teaching to culturally *relevant* teaching. "A next step for positing effective pedagogical practice is a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate. I term this pedagogy culturally relevant pedagogy" (p. 469).

"A next step for positing effective pedagogical practice is a theoretical model that not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate. I term this pedagogy culturally relevant pedagogy."

Ladson-Billings (1995) outlines three criteria for culturally relevant teaching:

- An ability to develop students academically. This means effectively helping students read, write, speak, compute, pose and solve higher order problems, and engage in peer review of problem solutions.
- A willingness to nurture and support cultural competence in both home and school cultures. The key is for teachers to value and build on skills that students bring from the home culture. For example, teachers of African American students can use the lyrics of rap songs to teach elements of poetry before they proceed to a study of more conventional poetry.
- The development of a sociopolitical or critical consciousness. Teachers help students recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities. Ladson-Billings offers the following vignette.

VIGNETTE: Exposing Inequities through Education

"A class of African American middle school students in Dallas identified the problem of their school being surrounded by liquor stores (Robinson, 1993). Zoning regulations in the city made some areas dry while the students' school was in a wet area. The students identified the fact that schools serving white, upper middle-class students were located in dry areas while schools in poor communities were in wet areas. The students, assisted by their teacher, planned a strategy for exposing this inequity. By using mathematics, literacy, social, and political skills, the students were able to prove their points with reports, editorials, charts, maps, and graphs. . . students' learning became a form of cultural critique." (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 477)

DISCUSSION

- **How does Ladson-Billings' vignette demonstrate the first criterion for culturally relevant teaching—developing students academically—and the third criterion—developing a sociopolitical or critical consciousness?**
- **How might the teacher in the vignette have drawn on students' cultural competence in order to accomplish the project?**
- **Think about your own teaching. What kind of project might you and your students develop that would employ culturally relevant teaching? How could you assess your project based on Ladson-Billings' three criteria?**

Nieto (1999) adds to this pedagogy her Five Principles of Learning. These are explained below:

- **Learning is actively constructed**
  This challenges the banking concept of education, in which learning is conceived of as a process of receiving, filing, and storing deposits of information (Freire, 1970). This principle acknowledges learner agency and works against the reproduction of socially sanctioned knowledge. It presupposes that all students have the ability to think and reason and that learning is more than rote memorization of facts.

- **Learning emerges from and builds on experience**
  Everyone has important experiences, attitudes, and behaviors to bring to the process of education. Some bring oral stories instead of written ones; while some experiences appear to possess more cultural capital, they are not inherently more valuable.

- **Learning is influenced by cultural differences**
  The work of Vygotsky (1978), Greenfield et al. (1996), and other cultural psychologists has demonstrated the cultural basis of learning. One example is Trumbull et al.'s (2001) work on collectivism and individualism, which refers to the degree to which a society values individual versus collective learning. This was elaborated in the previous section on Culture, Identity, and Development in *The Diversity Kit*.

- **Learning is influenced by the context in which it occurs**
  Social, political, and economic contexts all affect learning in significant, though not always obvious or predictable, ways. Nieto (1999) cites Kinchloe and Steinberg's proposition that cognition is always interactive with the environment and that schools are never ideology-free zones.

- **Learning is socially mediated and develops within a culture and community**
  Schools organize themselves in ways that are welcoming of particular groups and individuals, based on theories about what human development looks like, what is worth knowing, and what it means to be educated. Teachers act as sociocultural mediators, responsible for assisting their students through their zones of proximal development. Nieto (1999) cites Cummins' work on identity, affective development, and power relationships as issues that are involved in helping students move through their ZPD's to become successful learners.

Finally, Gay (2000) outlines Diamond and Moore's work regarding teacher roles and responsibilities. Culturally relevant teaching requires that teachers act as

- cultural organizers—understanding how culture operates in the classroom, creating learning environments that emanate cultural and ethnic diversity, and facilitating high performance for all students;
- cultural mediators—giving students opportunities to have critical conversations about cultural conflicts, analyzing mainstream cultural ideals realities and comparing them to other cultural ideals realities, clarifying ethnic identities, honoring other cultures, developing strong cross-cultural relationships, and combatting prejudices of all kinds;
- orchestrators of social contexts—making teaching compatible with the socio-cultural contexts of ethnically diverse students and helping students adapt their cultural competencies to school learning resources.

Most teachers would rightly comment that the above roles and responsibilities are daunting without a sound framework or strategies. The Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence, (CREDE) presents findings from research in this area. Their work suggests that there are several core principles that can be used as an organizing structure for programs for all at-risk children (Center for Research on Education, 2001). The CREDE principles include:

- **I.** Joint Productive Activity: Facilitate learning through joint productive activity among teachers and students.
- **II.** Language Development: Develop students' competence in the language and literacy of instruction throughout all instructional activities.
- **III.** Contextualization: Contextualize teaching and curriculum using the experiences and skills of home and community.
- **IV.** Challenging Activities: Challenge students towards cognitive complexity.
- **V.** Instructional Conversation: Engage students through dialogue.

Below we consider each principle, its potential contribution to creating a culturally relevant classroom, and some classroom indicators of the principle.

Principle I states "Facilitate learning through joint productive activity among teachers and students." The sociocultural view of learning espoused by Vygotsky (1978) and elaborated upon by Rogoff (1990) and Tharp & Gallimore (1988) posits that learning occurs when an adult or expert peer assists a learner through his or her ZPD. This happens most effectively when the novice and the expert are working together towards a common goal or product that connects "schooled" or "scientific" ideas with practical problems. When joint productive activity occurs, teachers and students create a common context of experience within school, even when they do not share the same home culture. In addition, conversation around the shared experience helps students learn relevant communicative and academic language (see **Table 2**, Center for Research on Education, 1997; 2001).

TABLE 2

TEACHER INDICATORS OF JOINT PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY
Plans instructional activities requiring student collaboration in the creation of a joint product.
Matches the demands of joint productive activity with time available for completion.
Arranges seating to accommodate individual and group needs to talk and work together.
Participates with students in joint productive activity.
Organizes students in a variety of groupings based on friendship, mixed academic ability, language, project, and interests or in any other way that promotes interaction.
Plans with students how to work in groups and how to make transitions from one activity to another, such as from large-group introduction to small-group activity, clean-up to dismissal, and the like.
Manages student and teacher access to materials and technology to facilitate joint productive activity.
Monitors and supports student collaboration in positive ways.

(adapted from Center for Research on Education, 2001)

Principle II states "Develop students' competence in the language and literacy of instruction throughout all instructional activities." This means that everyday social language, formal academic language, and subject matter lexicons (for example, the "language" of math) must all receive explicit attention through purposeful instructional conversations and reading and writing across the curriculum. The language of school is often unfamiliar to English language learners and other students with diverse needs, but linking children's ways of talking with academic subject matter will build the context necessary for children to acquire school discourse (**Table 3**).

TABLE 3

TEACHER INDICATORS OF DEVELOPING LANGUAGE ACROSS THE CURRICULUM
Listens to student talk about familiar topics such as home and community.
Responds to students' talk and questions, making "in-flight" changes during conversation that directly relate to students' comments.
Assists written and oral language development through modeling, eliciting, probing, restating, clarifying, questioning, praising, etc., in purposeful conversation and writing.
Interacts with students in ways that respect communication styles that differ from the teacher's, such as wait time, eye contact, turn taking, or spotlighting.
Connects student language with literacy and content area knowledge through speaking, listening, reading, and writing activities.
Encourages students to use content vocabulary to express their understanding.
Provides frequent opportunity for students to interact with each other and the teacher during instructional activities.
Encourages students' use of first and second languages in instructional activities.

(adapted from Center for Research on Education, 2001)

Principle III states "Connect teaching and curriculum to students' experiences and skills of home and community." Children will become literate within everyday, culturally meaningful contexts. Teachers must show students how abstract concepts (or "schooled concepts") are derived from and can be applied to the everyday world. In order for teachers to fully understand children's experiences and skills, it is necessary to collaborate with students' families and communities in order to understand patterns of participation, conversation, knowledge, and interests. With such understanding, teachers can transform instruction in the subject areas into meaningful activity for students (**Table 4**).

TABLE 4

TEACHER INDICATORS OF CONTEXTUALIZATION
Begins activities with what students already know from home, community, and school.
Designs instructional activities that are meaningful to students in terms of local community norms and knowledge.
Acquires knowledge of local norms and knowledge by talking to students and family and community members and by reading pertinent documents.
Helps students connect and apply their learning to home and community.
Plans jointly with students to design community-based learning activities.
Provides opportunities for parents or families to participate in classroom instructional settings.
Varies activities to include students' preferences, from collective and cooperative to individual and competitive.
Varies styles of conversation and participation to include students' cultural preferences, including co-narration, call-and-response, choral, and others.

(adapted from Center for Research on Education, 2001)

Principle IV states,"Challenge students toward cognitive complexity." All students must be provided with high academic standards and with meaningful assessment that allows feedback and responsive assistance. Instruction must be provided that requires higher order thinking, not simply drill exercises. It is often wrongly assumed that diverse and English language learners are of limited ability and cannot meet academic challenges (**Table 5**).

TABLE 5

TEACHER INDICATORS OF CHALLENGING ACTIVITIES
For each instructional topic, assures that students see the whole picture as a basis for understanding the parts.
Presents challenging standards for student performance.
Designs instructional tasks that advance student understanding to more complex levels.
Helps students accomplish more complex understanding by building from their previous success.
Gives clear, direct feedback about how student performance compares with challenging standards.

(adapted from Center for Research on Education, 2001)

Principle V states "Engage students through dialogue, especially the instructional conversation." The instructional conversation between teachers and students is based on the idea that students have something to say beyond a presupposed answer that the teacher possesses. Therefore, it is the teacher's role to listen carefully, make guesses about the intended meaning of the student, and adjust responses to assist the student's efforts. This conversation reveals the knowledge, skills, and values (the culture) of the learner, which provides the information necessary for the teacher to contextualize instruction to accommodate the student's experience and knowledge (**Table 6**).

TABLE 6

TEACHER INDICATORS OF INSTRUCTIONAL CONVERSATION
Arranges the classroom to accommodate conversation between the teacher and a small group of students on a regular and frequent basis.
Has a clear academic goal that guides conversation with students.
Ensures that student talk occurs at a higher rate than teacher talk.
Guides conversations to include students' views, judgments, and rationales using text evidence and other substantive report.
Ensures that all students are included in the conversation according to their preferences.
Listens carefully to assess levels of students' understanding.
Assists students' learning throughout the conversation by questioning, restating, praising, encouraging.
Guides the students to prepare a product that indicates that the instructional conversation's goal was achieved.

(adapted from Center for Research on Education, 2001)

In this section of *The Diversity Kit* we have explored several important concepts relating to culture, teaching, and learning. We have argued that holding high expectations for culturally and linguistically diverse students is crucial to ensuring high academic achievement. We have also challenged teachers and educators to question cultural deficit theories of learning and to replace them with ideas that value students' diverse cultural backgrounds, including the concept of funds of knowledge. Finally, we have presented five principles that can guide school-wide efforts to organize programs for all students. In the following section we expand upon the role of the community and explore the role of family in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Culture, Family, and Community

GUIDING QUESTIONS

? *How can educators identify the resources and knowledge that students' families and communities possess in order to enhance communication, student achievement, and family involvement?*

? *How can the cultural histories and knowledge of students, families, and communities be identified and integrated into the curriculum?*

? *How can family and parental involvement challenges be overcome?*

In this section of *The Diversity Kit* we explore how to cultivate collaboration with families and communities in order to support the learning of culturally and linguistically diverse students. Research reveals that families and communities play an important role in a child's learning process (Epstein, 2001; Epstein et al., 1997; Hidalgo, Bright, Siu, Swap, & Epstein, 1995). Understanding the families and communities in which students live can help educators develop student potential. Families and communities can also support student learning. However, to do this means that students' families and communities must be considered resources to be tapped. Sarason (1982) suggests:

> [O]ne has to believe that there are diverse types of people who can be helpful in the classroom even though they have no professional credentials. This in no way means that those who lack these credentials have, as a group, a kind of folk wisdom absent in professionals. Wisdom and imaginativeness are distributed in the same way among professional and nonprofessional groups. (p. 276)

As stated above, the literature on improving student achievement identifies the central role of family and community involvement. But this requires that schools do more than simply communicate students' academic achievement. Oakes and Lipton (1999) suggest:

> [A] further step is to connect students' work in school to their experiences in the community. By engaging students and their families in finding and solving real problems that matter to them at school and outside of school, schoolwork can become less abstract and detached (and thereby more likely to be learned). (p. 354)



Knowing how to relate to students whose socialization is unlike that of the teacher

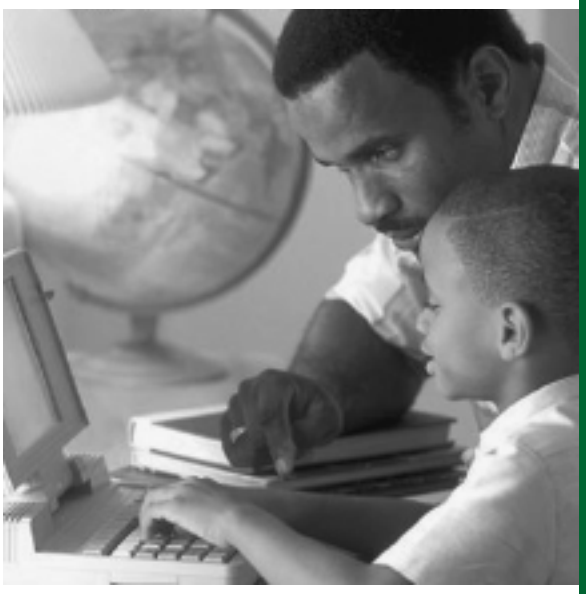
entails getting to know students' communities and homes and observing them in their own environments (Shade, Kelly, & Oberg, 1997). Further, understanding the cultural values and funds of knowledge that students' families and communities possess not only serves the purpose of improving academic achievement (though that may be the stated focus of schools), it also helps schools avoid interfering with families' child-rearing practices. When school cultural norms supplant those of the home, children can become alienated from their families. But when families and schools understand each other's values and ways of educating children, threats to family unity can be avoided and the positive effects of education within diverse cultural communities is enhanced.

Schools must look for practical ways to build meaningful partnerships with families and communities. Clearly, family and community are resources that educators need to draw upon. But as Lueder (1998) points out, it is also important that schools reconsider their assumptions about what family, school, and community partnerships can accomplish. He suggests the following benefits of these partnerships, which are far reaching and go to the heart of a school's success:

- The probability of higher student achievement, as well as more excitement and joy in the classroom and at home, is greater when this kind of learning community is created.
- Though the child remains central, engaging families and community in education will not only help the children but help the family, school, and community as well.
- When families and communities work collaboratively with the school, everyone's role becomes less stressful, more productive, and more rewarding. There will be fewer conflicts and problems. (p. 34)

Although McGroarty (1986) cautions that "knowledge of culture alone will not provide educators with sufficient knowledge to understand and modify school-related behavior" (p. 305), teacher awareness of their own culturally influenced attitudes and behavior provides a starting point for increased understanding of cultures. This kind of self-reflection can form the foundation for a better understanding of students, their families, and their communities (Brown, 1992). It is important for educators to have a fuller personal understanding of how culture influences linguistic, social, and mental behavior. In the Culture, Identity, and Development section of *The Diversity Kit* we explore cultural identity and challenge you to reflect on how culture has influenced your own identity.

Building on Family Strengths



Classroom practices should not undermine the cultural learning style of a child's home and community, though too often the cultural practices of schools have exactly that effect on diverse learners. For example, Moll (1992) contends that classroom practices underestimate what culturally and linguistically diverse children are able to do. Latino children, for example, are often assigned tasks that do not promote their educational and intellectual capabilities. The case of Latino students is not exceptional; too often schools are not as connected to the cultural practices of diverse students' families and communities as they need to be.

Scholars (e.g., Au & Jordan, 1981; Baker & Soden, 1998; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988) suggest that knowledge about family and community culture should influence three major components of education: pedagogy, curriculum, and school policy. Each of these areas can be informed by knowledge of students' social, linguistic, and academic strengths. For example, teachers can observe student-teacher and student-student interactions to understand how students learn and to determine their prior knowledge in a particular content area (Díaz, Moll, & Mehan, 1986). Pedagogically, when teachers understand students' backgrounds and cultures, they are best able to connect academic content to students' real-life experiences. The following vignette illustrates this well.

VIGNETTE: Bringing Schools and Communities Together

(adapted from Shields, 1995)

It's a misty, cold morning in South Bernstone, a small coal-mining and farming community in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains, and a group of fourth graders is sitting cross-legged, engrossed in the "lecture" being given by Mr. McCormick, a local farmer and a student's parent. Mr. McCormick is simply describing the process of fertilizing, weeding, and harvesting the field of pumpkins. He calls on children in turn who are interested in why bugs do not eat up all the pumpkins and how much money he will make when he brings the pumpkins to market.

This is the class' third visit to the farm—they witnessed some of the seeding and came back to see the new plants sprouting their first fruits. As with their previous visits, the students will go back to school and write essays in small groups in science class. This time, however, they will also get to bring pumpkins back, some of which will be cooked in the school kitchen. (p. 197)

DISCUSSION

- **Discuss the pedagogical techniques illustrated in the story.**
- **How would you plan a lesson around such an activity?**
- **In what ways do you draw upon parents' knowledge and experiences in students' learning activities?**

Impact of Culture on Learning

To design effective instruction, the cultural background of the learner must be understood. Villegas (1993) suggests that teachers can build bridges between home and school by selecting meaningful instructional materials, using examples and analogies to clarify new concepts, and using varied teaching strategies that connect cultural experiences and academic content. Cultural differences in approaches to formal learning can be accommodated in the classroom as well. For example, teachers who are able to distinguish individualist cultural values and independence from collectivist cultural values and interdependence are more deliberate in providing flexible instructional activities that give students from various cultural backgrounds opportunities to work in groups and on independent tasks (Greenfield et al., 1996).

To design effective instruction, the cultural background of the learner must be understood.

When teachers use the skills students have developed in the home and draw upon those skills to engage students in learning new academic material, they are effectively linking the home and students' prior knowledge with school. In one example, Díaz, Moll, & Mehan (1986) observed that writing in the study participants' home consisted mainly of phone messages, shopping lists, and an occasional letter; writing was limited to its functional and practical uses. Although not much writing was observed in the home and community, parents nevertheless associated writing with being *bien educado*, or well-educated. Díaz et al.'s (1986) findings effectively illustrate that teachers' awareness of literacy acts at home (such as writing) can inform instructional strategies that rely on what students already know.

In general, to get students actively involved in writing, teachers need to use community information to motivate them. Díaz et al. (1986) suggest using strategies such as prewriting discussions to explore a topic that is of importance to the community. Teachers can also assign activities that involve the students' exploration of their own community. For example, students can conduct a survey with adults in the communities on the topic of bilingual education. After drafting a piece of writing on a topic of importance, students can seek feedback from teachers and peers and revise the piece to create a final product. At each stage students can be encouraged to respond to both the content of the piece and the message it communicates.

In *Creating Culturally Responsive Classrooms*, Shade et al. (1997) advocate incorporating social interaction into the writing process. To do this, Shade et al. offer the example of students submitting their written work to "publishing companies." "Editors" subsequently review the work and then send their feedback to the author through an electronic mail system. The work is revised, published, and catalogued in the school's library. Shade et al. conclude that students' writing is enhanced when it incorporates collaboration and social interaction into the writing process. This example shows that by designing activities that require social interaction, educators can create opportunities for students to connect their unique forms of communication to the more formal writing process used in school.

ACTIVITY: Shade et al.'s Social Process of Writing

In small groups or in pairs, discuss the following questions:

- *How have you seen student writing encouraged through increased emphasis on social process? What positive effects or challenging situations has this approach resulted in?*
- *How would you have to change processes in your classroom to try an approach like the researchers used?*

Cultural Knowledge, Curriculum, and Learning

As discussed above, it is extremely valuable to create ways for students to apply social processes learned at home and in communities to school activities. But an even more direct connection between home-community knowledge and school curriculum often goes unutilized as an avenue for engaging students. This connection entails linking students' home and prior knowledge to school learning. All students enter school with certain knowledge and skills acquired in the home. Damen (1987) describes prior learning as an important factor in academic learning because students learn better when they are able to connect their prior learning to new information. As Au & Kawakami (1994) point out, one important reason why linguistically and culturally diverse students are often not successful in school is the mismatch between school culture and home culture. They suggest that the success of these students is also affected by relationships, communication, and respect. According to Hollins (1996), building on and extending the knowledge learned in the home culture will enhance and facilitate students' academic growth and success in school.

Too often, schools fail to identify the daily experience and cultural knowledge of their learners and to integrate it with the school curriculum. Research conducted by Moll (1992; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & González, 1992) has revealed that educational institutions do not view working-class, minority students as emerging from households rich in social and intellectual resources. Gonzalez et al. (1993) similarly observe:

Too often, schools fail to identify the daily experience and cultural knowledge of their learners and to integrate it with the school curriculum.

> Rather than focusing on the knowledge these students bring to school and using it as a foundation for learning, schools have emphasized what these students lack in terms of the forms of language and knowledge sanctioned by the schools. This emphasis on so-called disadvantages has provided justification for lowered academic expectations and inaccurate portrayals of these children and their families. (p. 2)

Before any meaningful attempt can be made to connect student knowledge to schooling, we must challenge the deficit assumption. However, it is not enough just to believe that students' prior knowledge is important. Hollins (1996) underscores the importance of having specific information about students, families, and communities. To begin with, teachers need information concerning the knowledge, experiences, perceptions, and expectations of the students they teach. They also need to understand the expectations, perceptions, and desires of students' parents, caregivers, and significant others. Beyond these sources, educators need knowledge about the history and culture—as well as the social, political, and economic dynamics—of the community in which they teach. Hollins (1996) suggests that

> the basic premise of the theory of cultural mediation in instruction is that teaching and learning are more meaningful and productive when curriculum content and instructional processes include culturally mediated cognition, culturally appropriate social situations for learning, and culturally valued knowledge. (p. 150)

Linguistic knowledge is the single most important type of knowledge many students bring to the classroom; it is also the type of knowledge schools most neglect to draw upon. In the case of speakers of dialects or home languages different from those used in the school, teachers can help students be successful by recognizing and building on the strengths of the students' language. Speakers of a non-dominant language may feel that the language they bring to the classroom is somehow not valued. Effective teachers can make their instruction culturally responsive by providing opportunities for students to use knowledge of their first language to gain proficiency in English. This underscores Boykin & Bailey's (2000) observation that students' academic achievement and cognitive functioning are enhanced when the school's contexts for learning are responsive to the child's background and cultural experiences.

Effective teachers can make their instruction culturally responsive by providing opportunities for students to use knowledge of their first language to gain proficiency in English.

Teachers also need to know how to conduct lessons that reflect the values of the home culture. In cases of cultural mismatch, teachers can be informed about practices that are effective for

students from a wide variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Sometimes teachers have to change from a traditional instructional strategy to one that focuses on the values and cultures of the students. According to Ellison, Boykin, Towns, & Stokes (2000), a skilled teacher identifies those aspects of students' cultural backgrounds that will help them self-motivate, make adjustments, and learn in the classroom. In short, teachers need to create a learning environment using the knowledge of the role culture plays in students' learning.

ACTIVITY: Examining Curriculum for Culture and Language

(adapted from Hollins, 1996)

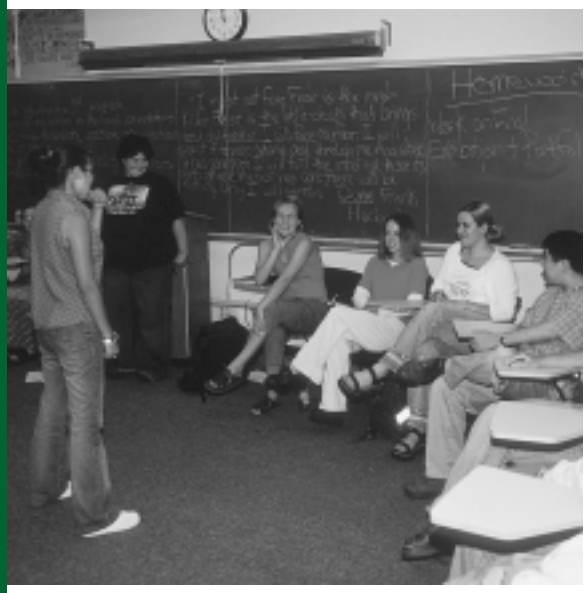
In a small group, examine a curriculum guide or a textbook. Use the following questions to determine the appropriateness of its content for the variety of cultures and languages represented by your students.

- *How does the content provide a positive historical perspective for the related accomplishments, values, and beliefs of a culturally diverse population?*
- *How does the content reflect the accomplishments of different ethnic groups in developing new knowledge in the field?*
- *In what ways does the content allow for students' use of cultural knowledge as well as knowledge about culture?*
- *How does the curriculum address the expectations and aspirations of the students and their families?*

Overcoming Challenges to Involving Families and Communities

Families and communities can be valuable resources for schools and teachers in that they provide knowledge about the culture and language of their students. Tapping these resources requires changing how schools perceive the parents' and communities', values and beliefs. These changes include building a school culture that will accept values, beliefs, and ways of viewing the world that are often quite different from those of the mainstream population. As diverse populations come into the community, changes such as these will have to take place to ensure excellent and equitable education for all students.

Over time, the role of families and parents has gradually changed as a result of broader changes occurring in society. Changes in families' ethnic, linguistic, and racial compositions; cultural backgrounds; and socioeconomic conditions impact a school's interactions with its students' families. Further, understanding the communication patterns of culturally and linguistically diverse students can either enhance or discourage school collaboration with families and communities. Weinstein-Shr (1995) maintains that in order to help refugee and immigrant families, schools need to develop an understanding of the linguistic, religious, and geographic differences (including differences between rural and urban settings) among their diverse student population. For example, the first wave of adult refugees from Vietnam, Cambodia, and Cuba had university educations. In contrast, most of those arriving later were farmers with little or no education.



Weinstein-Shr (1995) notes that the following three issues need to be understood when working with a refugee population: survival, communication, and power. Many refugees fled from their home country and have survived despite some very difficult experiences. Once in the United States, these groups count on their traditional kinship bonds and community organizations to provide them with resources for solving some of their immediate problems. So, while most Asian immigrants place a high value on education, parents are perplexed when the teacher asks them for help. It is

important for teachers to become familiar with how the families view the roles of the teacher and school. Social, cultural, and historic contexts impact how families participate in their children's education.

In other instances, teachers may encounter a sense of alienation in Hispanic and other families because of other kinds of cultural misunderstandings. Bermúdez (1994) identifies various barriers that limit family involvement, including (1) working parents, (2) lack of confidence, (3) lack of English skills, (4) lack of understanding of the home-school partnership, (5) lack of understanding of the school system, (6) negative past experiences with schools, and (7) insensitivity and hostility on the part of school personnel.

A brief description of each of these challenges to family participation follows.

- **Work interference:** Many parents hold nine-to-five jobs. Meetings occurring in the evening would be more appropriate for these parents. It is important to include other members of the family such as grandparents, aunts, and uncles, especially if the child is from a single-parent home. Some of these challenges can be overcome if schools assess parents' work hours and institute flexible schedules for parent activities.

- **Self-confidence:** Believing that education only takes place in school is a misconception held by many Hispanic and Asian groups as well as other recent immigrants. At times, parents lose self-confidence when schools implement partnership activities. Schools that nurture parents by involving them through non-threatening environments and through home activities that focus on family strengths have a better chance for success than schools that rely on traditional parental involvement activities. Arrastía (1995) observed in the Mother's Reading Project how mothers from different ethnic groups built their self-confidence through storytelling; together they came to understand how each individual, regardless of educational level, possesses rich knowledge that can be expressed through stories. Such programs have been successful in engaging hard-to-reach parents.

- **Language skills:** Parents who do not understand or speak English have not been able to collaborate easily with schools. Both language and (in some cases) economic realities may make them feel isolated within the school. Schools must design and implement a plan for effective communication between school and home. Good communication is at the center of effective family and parental involvement. If the school or teacher sees families and parents as resources, then communications will be two-way—initiated by teachers and by family members (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders & Simon, 1997). Schools need to look closely at various ways of helping families and communities. For example, providing English-as-a-second-language classes at the school or in the community is one effective strategy. Often when schools assess parents' needs, they gain insight into specific language needs, talents, and resources that foster effective working partnerships between schools and families.

- **Cultural differences in viewing parents' role:** In some cultures the parents' role in school is very different from the traditional American role. Because of this, teachers must be able to create partnerships with parents in a way that respects their beliefs and values. Building and gaining the trust of these parents is crucial. Participation in aptly designed programs changes parents' attitudes and perceptions as to what they are capable of doing. As they gain confidence, parents begin to understand how to collaborate with teachers. Providing multiple opportunities to participate—such as evening or Saturday activities, fairs, conferences, and meetings—will enable parents to select from an array of activities that are sensitive to their needs and life circumstances.

- **Knowledge of the school system:** Parents need to know how the school system works and how they can have access to it for the betterment of their children. Too often, school personnel mistrust or misunderstand parents, believing that they are not interested in or do not value education.

- **Past experiences:** Some parents have negative feelings and experiences related to school. Some have experienced racial discrimination, encountered few teacher role models from their language or cultural background, or have been punished in school for speaking their home language. These and other experiences are difficult to forget. Schools need to not only provide more positive experiences for students but also to engage with families in ways that demonstrate respect, make clear the desire to collaborate, and explicitly create a positive climate to counter the negative history that individual parents may have had.

- **Attitudes of school personnel:** School personnel may subtly display patronizing or negative attitudes toward parents. For example, communication with parents often occurs only in English, without regard to whether the family understands English. Schools need to welcome parents whenever they visit the school by conveying a positive attitude toward the first language of the students and families. All school personnel should have opportunities to participate in staff development that will increase their awareness and acceptance of cultural differences within the school. Communicating with parents about student progress on a regular basis sends the message that the school cares and considers families to be key partners in the work of teaching and learning.

ACTIVITY: Challenging Cultural Assumptions of Parental Involvement

Refugees and immigrants come to the United States under many different circumstances. Each group is as different as the countries from which they come; they have different beliefs, values, and languages.

In a small group or in pairs, read the following teacher comment and answer the questions that follow.

"I feel so bad for these kids. The parents don't come to parent-teacher conferences. I've never seen any at open house either. I don't think they really try to help the kids with school. I wonder, maybe in their culture, education isn't as important."—Third-grade teacher

- *What are some possible reasons why the parents may not have participated in their child's education?*
- *What questions might the teacher ask herself or others to gain insight into parents' beliefs regarding their participation in school?*
- *How could parents participate in their child's education in ways that the teacher may not know about?*
- *What kinds of opportunities can the teacher explore to collaborate with families?*

Just as parents have challenges that impede their collaboration with schools, teachers have challenges that impede their work with parents. Bermúdez (1994) reports the following barriers that impede teachers when it comes to family and community involvement:

- Negative attitudes toward parents: misconceptions and assumptions about parents
- Unfamiliar cultures: lack of understanding of the students' cultures
- Language barriers: inability to understand the parents' home languages
- Training: lack of training in working with parents
- Increased responsibilities: lack of time to develop family involvement activities
- Institutional support: lack of support from school district

ACTIVITY: Overcoming Barriers to Involvement

Divide into six groups with each group drawing a number corresponding to one of the six barriers above. Discuss your selected barrier and develop three strategies to overcome the barrier.

Onikama, Hammond, & Koki's (1998) synthesis of research on family and community participation in school offers the following general conclusions:

- Family involvement is multifaceted and complex. There are many types of family involvement in education. In developing a family involvement program, educators need to consider the cultural, linguistic, and economic factors that are relevant to the unique needs of culturally and linguistically diverse children and families.

- Home, school, and community are three major spheres of influence on children. Their interactions may be either positive or negative, close or distant, growth promoting or growth discouraging. They range from one-on-one interactions with the child to events occurring in the society itself. All three major spheres of influence should be considered in efforts to promote family involvement in education (Epstein, 1995; 2001).

- Some barriers to participation, such as lack of time and knowledge about how to become involved, cut across all cultures and peoples. Others barriers, such as language differences and distrust of schools, may be particular to specific cultural groups.

- Family involvement in some regions may have unique barriers. For example, a community's religious and cultural priorities may often affect the level of family participation in school functions. Barriers that result from the community's culture raise special challenges for educators soliciting family involvement at school (p.19).

Finally, Chavkin & Williams (1993) suggest that schools can benefit from establishing some general guidelines for family and community involvement, especially when the school proposes culturally responsive participation. School districts that are willing to establish realistic guidelines will change the way of viewing family and community involvement. Schools, teachers, families, and the communities all reap the benefits and share the common goal of success for every student.



In this section of *The Diversity Kit* we have explored the role of family and community in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students. We have highlighted

the academic and social benefits of a culturally responsive pedagogy that incorporates students' prior learning. We have also stressed the importance of teachers knowing the cultural backgrounds of the students they teach.

In the following section of *The Diversity Kit*, we explore various aspects of language and how language use impacts the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students. We then dig more deeply into the areas of second language learning, literacy, and assessment. We reiterate that the areas of human development, culture, and language should not be explored as isolated, unrelated fields of study; rather, each of these three sections are deeply intertwined. We therefore encourage you to utilize all three sections of *The Diversity Kit* in your exploration of diversity and social change in education.

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RESOURCES and FURTHER READING

Chavez Chavez, R. & O'Donnell, J. (1998). Speaking the Unpleasant: The Politics of (non)Engagement in the Multicultural Education Terrain. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

This book consists of 17 chapters contributed by a variety of multicultural experts and academics. The intent of the book is to address (non)engagement of both students and pre- and in-service teachers with specific consideration of racism and discrimination issues. In short, the authors seek ways in which to engage the mainstream. The chapters confront this challenge at both the personal and institutional levels. The book is designed to move the reader off-center, and from reflective to reflexive teaching practices.

Genesee, F. (Ed.). (1998). Educating Second Language Children (6th printing). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

In this volume, the contributors emphasize that educating children requires not only attention to language development but also the development of the whole child. Similarly, contextual factors—including school, family, and community—must also be considered for their impact on the education of second language children. Thus, the scope of this volume includes addressing the influence of culture, the role of the family, and understanding the challenges that second language, immigrant and refugee children face. Some of the authors tackle tough issues such as low-literacy students and special education needs, and others offer strategies and tools that will assist any educator in the classroom.

Nieto, S. (1999). Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education. New York: Longman.

This book, now in its third edition, meets the challenge of addressing the social, political and cultural contexts of education and how these contexts impact the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students. The book provides a solid conceptual framework and utilizes numerous case studies throughout, which serve to link theory to classroom practice. Questions at the end are designed to encourage practitioners to critically address issues of race, language, ethnicity, discrimination, and teacher expectations.

Perez, B. (Ed.). (1998). Sociocultural Contexts of Language and Literacy. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

This edited volume emphasizes the social and cultural contexts of education on the acquisition of language and development of literacy among second language learners in the United States. The editor's framework includes the social construction of literacy, based on the work of Buner and Vygotsky among others. This constructivist view rejects the notion that literacy consists of simple decoding and knowledge of sounds. Some of the contributions focus on ethnically diverse communities (American Indian, Puerto Rican, Vietnamese), and the work of the editor focuses primarily on literacy in the classroom. Each chapter ends with several activities for educators interested in exploring literacy grounded in culture and community.

WEB SITES and ONLINE RESOURCES

http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/presrvce/pe3lk1.htm

This site provides an overview of issues relating to multicultural education and educating teachers who will work with culturally and linguistically diverse students. Additional readings are available online through the links provided.

http://www.tolerance.org/index.jsp

This extremely useful Web site is devoted to promoting tolerance and social justice. The homepage consists of links specifically designed for teachers, parents, and children. The Teaching Tolerance organization provides many useful resources free of charge, including a biannual journal and curriculum kits. The site also addresses current events and news topics related to tolerance.

http://www.knowledgeloom.org/crt/index.shtml

This professional development Web site, operated by the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University, addresses a wide variety of topics regarding what works in teaching and learning. The Culturally Relevant Teaching Spotlight provides a forum for discussion with a panel of experts, highlights success stories from exemplary classrooms, and points practitioners to additional resources and research. Educators can directly access the panel forum and join the discussion. They may also register on the Web site to share stories and contribute their ideas.

http://projects.terc.edu/cheche_konnen

The Chèche Konnen Center is engaged in a national reform initiative to improve elementary and middle school science teaching and learning for language minority students. The Center utilizes a research-based approach to teacher professional development that integrates inquiry and reflection in three areas: science and mathematics, teaching and learning, and culture and language. Educators interested in constructivist science teaching with English language learners can access an array of information and resources on the site.

Videos

The Color of Fear. (n.d.). Stirfry Seminars, Oakland, CA (www.stirfryseminars.com)

In this 90 minute video, eight men from different racial groups confront racism and discrimination through their interaction and dialogue over a 3-day period. The video offers powerful perspectives on racism and discrimination and can serve as an excellent point of departure for those wishing to facilitate conversations about social change. The video is aimed towards an audience of mature adults. A sequel to the video, *Walking Each Other Home*, provides additional depth and insight into the relationships that evolve among the men.

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