

Inclusionary Practices and Systems:

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY

WHAT IS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY?

Culturally responsive pedagogy is a student-centered approach to identifying students' individual and cultural strengths and then using them to foster academic achievement. This approach promotes equitable opportunities in multicultural settings.

WHY IS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PEDAGOGY IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE THE OUTCOMES?

Culturally relevant pedagogy furnishes instructors with the tools to support students with the type of education they deserve and are entitled to receive. Recognizing cultural references in all aspects of learning keeps students engaged while enriching classroom experience. Culturally relevant pedagogy also presents opportunities to build relationships of understanding and to avoid cultural misinterpretation. This strategy recognizes and celebrates identities, lived experiences, and culture while nurturing intrinsic talent and boundless abilities.

IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER:

- Culturally responsive teaching creates a student-centered learning environment for students from different countries and different ethnic backgrounds.
- This method encourages students to explore different cultures, traditions, and beliefs.
- Instructors must assess their own behaviors and possible cultural and racial biases.
- Teachers should consider all students' backgrounds and readiness levels and evaluate the classroom and school community to ensure students of all cultures are comfortable and feel supported.
- Teachers should show interest in their students' backgrounds and cultural strengths and provide a learning environment that promotes cultural exchange and acceptance.
- Culturally responsive teaching strategies include:
 - Recognizing the learning styles of your students.
 - Contextualizing equations using word problems that reference student interests and cultures.
 - Using student diction before academic terms to capture attention and build understanding.
 - Welcoming parent participation when starting a new unit or trying an education tool for the first time. Parents can provide cultural context, and they act as the main educators in many societies.
 - Encouraging students to leverage their student capital.
 - Considering classroom representation.
 - Using diverse resources.

CASE STUDY: Robert Lince Early Learning Center

At Robert Lince Early Learning Center, culturally responsive pedagogy is the foundation of all teaching activities, decision making, and family/community partnerships. Robert Lince incorporates this pedagogy as they navigate supporting their diverse population, ensuring all individual and cultural strengths of students are honored, promoted, and most importantly, celebrated. Robert Lince has experienced firsthand that when students are supported in a way that intentionally promotes the individuality of each student, they are able to create a student-centered environment that fosters acceptance, membership, and belonging.

One example of culturally responsive pedagogy in action at Robert Lince Early Learning Center include their dual language inclusion preschool program. In this program, students who speak a first language other than English, have the opportunity to learn 80% of their day in Spanish and 20% of their day in English. For the majority of students, this means they are able to learn academic content in their primary language. This not only validates their culture and background however it honors and validates their heritage and cultural identity. It also deepens the knowledge of essential foundational skill and breaks down the language barrier to give kids a running start. For all students, the program fosters a positive interdependence and the growth of socio-cultural competencies which allow students to honor and respect differences and to celebrate one another's strengths. Students in this program will feed into the two-way 50:50 program in kindergarten. In a two-way program, approximately half of the students speak English as their first language and half speak another language as their primary language. In the 50:50 program, Robert Lince dual language preschoolers will become the Spanish experts in the dual language program.

Not only does this program validate and honor differences, it helps foster a culture of inclusivity throughout the school. Curriculum and books are carefully chosen to support and represent the identities of all the students we serve. Thematic units, songs/chants, visuals, gestures, and other

strategies are used to ensure students have scaffolds and supports to learn a second language. Books written in Spanish first with an intentional focus on cultural identity, social emotional supports, and building language are essential to our curriculum. Arts and culture are integrated throughout the curriculum and school experiences or events to enhance the culturally relevant learning environment. Hands-on and engaging lessons are implemented with the infusion STEAM, SEL, Universal Design for Learning, and higher order activities.

The Migrant Parent Advisory Council helps to give parent voice into the program, supports, and school activities that encompass learning. Improvement science and a focus on equity and strengthening preschool to kindergarten transitions are at the heart of the work. Intentional collaboration and data driven conversations regarding student needs and engaging pedagogies are priorities in Selah. Utilizing student voice, interest, and parent and community partnerships to inform programming and to provide engaging classroom and school activities are an essential part of building the culture of inclusivity.

Inclusivity goes beyond the classroom and it permeates the school culture and community in order to celebrate the strengths and diversity of others. The belief that every student is worthy and capable of making meaningful contributions to the community and the belief that together with students, parents, and the community a culture of lifelong learning for all will be cultivated. In Selah, all means all. Every child deserves the very best we can give and the assurance that they belong. A culture of inclusivity means equity and access for all students. The Viking Promise is a promise in which the needs of the whole child are met by creating an equity centered, engaging and personalized learning experience in an emotionally and physically safe environment for each child in the Selah School District Preschool. This is the Viking Way!

RESOURCES

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