Cultural Competency & Beyond for Educational Leaders

Missouri Learning Forward Conference
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Today’s Professional Learning Goals:

● *Define* cultural competency *within* the context of a school organization.

● *Reflect* on one’s own Cultural Frame of Reference...

● *Assess* your own school organization’s level of cultural competence.

● *Discuss* how district policies and school-wide practices might inhibit cultural competence across the organization.
Today’s Agenda...

❖ Overview of Cultural Competency & Beyond...
❖ Cultural Frame of Reference Exercise
❖ Cultural Proficiency Continuum “Mix & Match” Activity
❖ Tabletop Discussion: The impact of educator bias on underserved student groups
❖ Wrap-Up/ Concluding Remarks
How do we define **Cultural Competency**?

*Cultural Competence* - a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system...and enable that system [school organization]...to work effectively in “cross-cultural” situations.

*Source:* Cross, et al. 1989
How do we define **Cultural Competency**?

*Culture* implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group.

*Competence* means having the capacity to function effectively.

**Source:** Cross, et al. 1989
Understanding One’s Own Cultural Frame of Reference:

Personal Reflection Exercise- [Who Am I?: Identity, Exposure, Isolation, Bias... ]
Cultural Destructiveness-
“See the difference; stomp it out”

Central Theme- Using one’s power to eliminate or eradicate the culture of another.

Examples- genocide or ethnocide; exclusion laws; avoiding or excluding certain topics, historical events, or other aspects of the curriculum.
Cultural Incapacity- “See the difference; make it wrong”

Central Theme- Asserting the superiority of one’s own culture, and behaving in ways that disrespect/devalue other cultures.

Examples- disproportionate allocation of valuable resources to certain groups, and not others; lowered expectations; expecting “others” to assimilate or change.
Cultural Blindness-
“See the difference; act like you don’t”

Central Theme - Acting as if cultural differences do not matter, or as if there are not differences among or between cultures.

Examples - discomfort in noting differences; beliefs or actions that assume the world is fair and achievement is based on merit.
Cultural Pre-Competence

“See the difference; respond to it inappropriately”

Central Theme- Recognizing the limitations of the organization’s practices or one’s own skillset to meet the needs of a diverse student population or workforce.

Examples- delegation of “diversity work” to others rather than taking collective responsibility; implementing quick-fix, packaged short-term programs; unclear district-wide expectations for diversity, equity, & inclusion
Cultural Competence
“See the difference; value it”

Central Theme- Communicating or behaving in ways that meet the needs of others before meeting one’s own needs (employing learner-centered approaches).

Examples- student advocacy; on-going education about oneself (self-awareness) and others (sensitivity); support and modeling, and taking risks to achieve organizational/school-wide goals.
Cultural Proficiency

“See the difference; respond to it positively. Engage & adapt.”

Central Theme- Enacting organizational policies that lead to effective "cross-cultural communication" and interactions that close educational opportunity gaps.

Examples- interdependence; personal reflection & critical examination that leads to transformation; advocacy for and alliance with cultural groups other than one’s own; congruence of policies & practices (organizational level); alignment of values, beliefs, & behaviors (personal level).
Examining the School Organization’s Levels of Cultural Competence...

Organizational Assessment Tool
Cultural Proficiency Continuum- “Mix & Match” Activity
Cultural Competence: Understanding Our Biases

**Bias** is defined as prejudice in favor of or against one thing, a person, or a group as compared with another usually in a way that is considered to be unfair. Biases may be held by an individual, group, or institution, and can have negative or positive consequences.

*Source: UCSF- Office of Diversity & Outreach*
Cultural Competence: Understanding Our Biases... [beliefs, feelings, attitudes, values...]

❖ **Explicit/Conscious Bias** - A person is very clear about his or her feelings and attitudes, and related behaviors are conducted with intent.

❖ **Implicit/Unconscious Bias** - Bias that operates outside the person's awareness and can be in direct contradiction to espoused beliefs and values.

Source: National Center for Cultural Competence- Georgetown University
5 *INTENTIONAL* Ways to Address Bias in Schools:

- **Increase Awareness** - learn about bias in a supportive school culture.
- **Name It** - Recognize bias in yourself/others through courageous conversations.
- **Anticipate It** - Understand that bias exists; seek to intentionally reduce it.
- **Build Empathy** - Replace negative attitudes/assumptions about students and their families with positive experiences and interactions.
- **Be Accountable** - Collect data to reveal school-wide patterns of bias.

Resources

- Building Equity: Policies and Practices to Empower All Learners
- Belonging Through a Culture of Dignity
- Culturally Responsive Teaching & The Brain
- Cultural Competence Now: 56 Exercises to Help Educators Understand and Challenge Bias, Racism, and Privilege
THANK YOU!

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