New York State Education Department
Office of Special Education
Educational Partnership

Creating Welcoming and Affirming Learning Environments

Implementing the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CRSE) Framework

Developed by the Technical Assistance Partnership for Equity at Bank Street College of Education

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Our Team

Today's Facilitators

Objectives

- Understand how a welcoming and affirming learning environment improves student outcomes

- Better understand their own identities and how those identities shape their relationships and experiences

- Develop strategies for creating a welcoming and affirming learning environment

- Identify 2-3 next steps for ongoing professional learning

Norms and Community Agreements

- Participate to the best of your abilities

- Speak your truth- Use "I" statements

- Ask clarifying questions and provide feedback

- Listen with respect

- Honor confidentiality (What's said here stays here, what's learned here leaves here)

- Expect and accept a lack of closure

- Push your growing edge

Slide Marker Icons

Activity

Poll

Discussion

Action Plan

Reflection

Blueprint for Improved Results for Students with Disabilities

Self-Advocacy

Students engage in self-advocacy and are involved in determining their own educational goals and plan.

Family Partnership

Parents, and other family members, are engaged as meaningful partners in the special education process and the education of their child.

Specially-Designed Instruction

Teachers design, provide, and assess the effectiveness of specially-designed instruction to provide students with disabilities with access to participate and progress in the general education curriculum.

Research-Based Instruction

Teachers provide research-based instructional teaching and learning strategies and supports for students with disabilities.

Multi-tiered Support

Schools provide multi-tiered systems of behavioral and academic support.

Inclusive Activities

Schools provide high-quality inclusive programs and activities.

Transition Support

Schools provide appropriate instruction for students with disabilities in career development and opportunities to participate in work-based learning.

The Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education (CRSE) Framework

Goals of the framework:

- Affirm racial and cultural identities

- Foster positive academic outcomes

- Empower students as agents of social change

- Develop students' abilities to make connections across identity & culture

- Cultivate student engagement through critical thinking & curiosity

Principles of CRSE

Welcoming and Affirming Environments

Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment

High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction

Ongoing Professional Learning

Principles of CRSE

Welcoming and Affirming Environments

Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment

High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction

Ongoing Professional Learning

Understanding the Research

Welcoming and Affirming Learning Environments

What it looks like

An environment where students:

- Feel like they belong, are treated fairly, and have positive relationships, especially with teachers.

- Find themselves reflected in the learning environment and materials.

- Learn about and respect different cultural identities.

- See that cultural identities and differences are affirmed, valued and utilized as strengths for learning.

Building a Belonging Classroom

Reflection

1. What are your key takeaways from the video?

2. Think about your own experiences with learning or trying something new.

   - What are 5-7 qualities of a class or other environment where you felt a sense of belonging and support?
   - What impact did this have on your ability to learn, voice your opinion, or take intellectual risks?

"...successful social interactions comprise some of the most potent rewarding stimuli for human beings."

- Krach, S., Paulus, F. M., Bodden, M., & Kircher, T. (2010).

Students who feel like they belong at school have:

- Fewer absences
- Higher graduation rates
- Lower rates of disciplinary infractions
- More positive attitudes towards learning
- Higher self-esteem

- Allen, K., Kern, M., Vella-Brodrick, D., Hattie, J., & Waters, L., (2018).

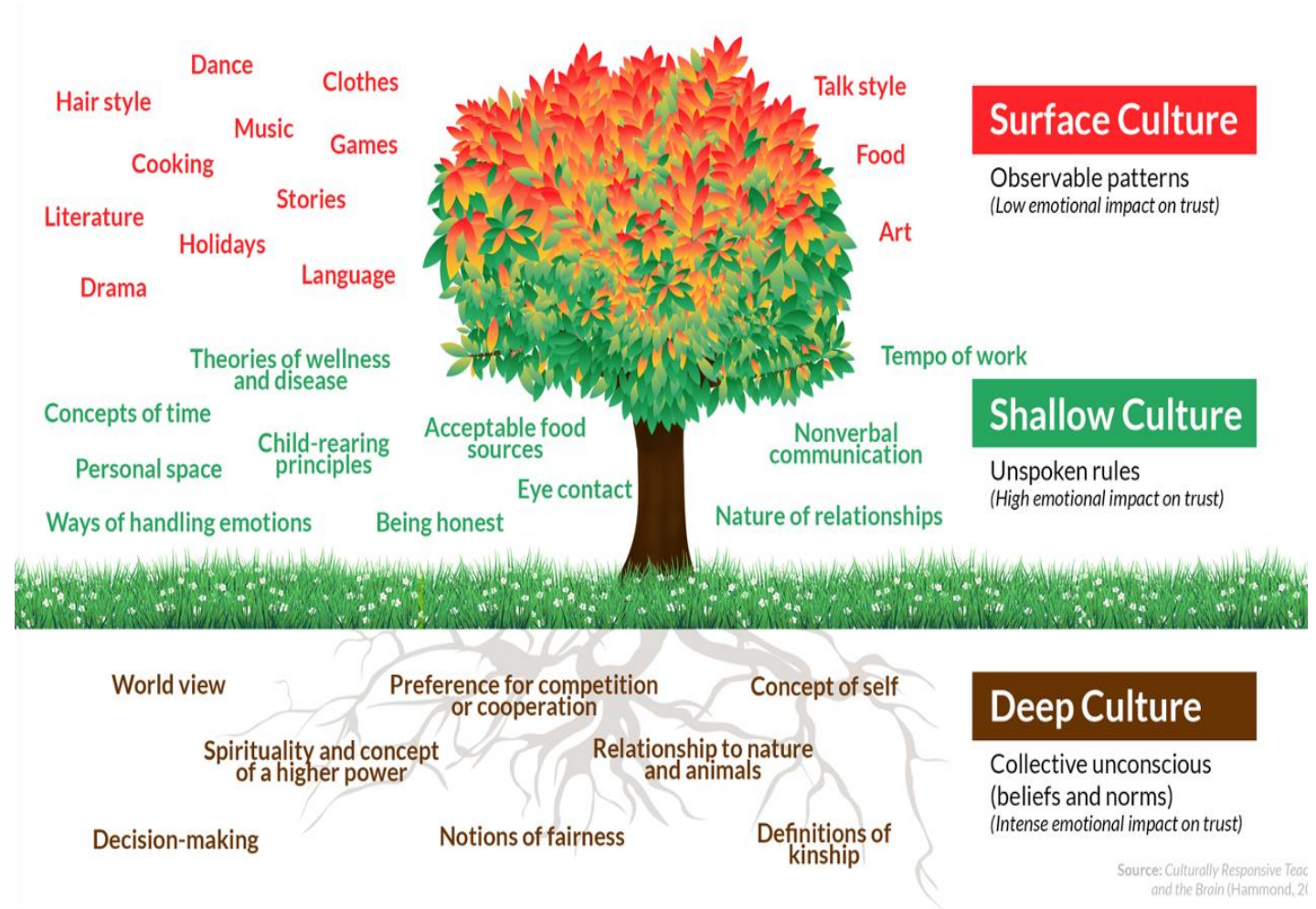# Benefits of positive relationships between teachers and students

- Increase students' sense of belonging

- Build students' motivation and engagement

- Reduce behavioral challenges

- Are correlated with academic performance

- Rimm-Kaufman, S., & Sandilos, L. (2010); Saft, E. W., & Pianta, R. C. (2001).

Factors that may influence relationships and belonging

- Academic ability or disability

- Social skills

- Language skills

- Behavioral challenges

- Mental health challenges (anxiety, depression, etc.)

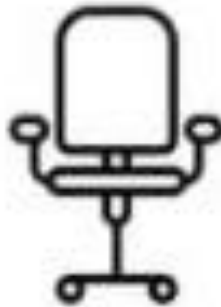- Cultural differences (race, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic)

- Rimm-Kaufman, S., & Sandilos, L. (2010); Saft, E. W., & Pianta, R. C. (2001).

Culture

- Race
- Gender
- Ability
- Socio-economic status
- Language
- Sexual orientation
- Nationality
- Religion

Surface Culture
Observable patterns
(Low emotional impact on trust)

Shallow Culture
Unspoken rules
(High emotional impact on trust)

Deep Culture
Collective unconscious
(beliefs and norms)
(Intense emotional impact on trust)

Source: Culturally Responsive Teac
and the Brain (Hammond, 20

- Hammond, Z. (2015) and New York State Education Department (2019).

The neuroscience of implicit bias

Schemas

How might these factors impact your relationships with students?

- Academic ability or disability

- Social skills

- Language skills

- Behavioral challenges

- Mental health challenges (anxiety, depression, etc.)

- Cultural identities (race, ethnicity, gender, religion, etc.)

- Rimm-Kaufman, S., & Sandilos, L. (2010); Saft, E. W., & Pianta, R. C. (2001).

"A diverse student population creates a richer learning environment because students learn most from those who have very different life experiences from theirs."

- Wells, Amy Stuart et. al., (2016).

Hearing diverse perspectives benefits <u>all</u> students, building:

- Increased critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- More creativity of thought
- Greater empathy and less stereotyping
- More civic engagement
- Enhanced interpersonal skills

- Wells, A.S., Fox, L., & Cordova-Cobo, D. (2016).

Exploring Our Own Identities

Social Identity Wheel Activity

Goals

- Reflect critically on our own identities and how social contexts influence how strongly we feel those identities.

- Explore what identities we share, or don't share, with others and how this may impact our relationships.

- Learn about others' identities and how those identities shape their experiences in the world.

Social Identity Wheel Activity

Directions

1. **Fill in (or think about) how you identify for each category in the outer oval.** You can use examples from p. 2 of the handout or your own words.

   - Example: For "Sex," you could write Female, Male, or Intersex.

2. **Respond to the five questions in the middle of the wheel.** Answer each question by either writing your answers under each question or by putting the number of the question into the corresponding identities in the outer oval. You may find that some identity categories are used more than once in responding to the questions.

3. **Reflect on your answers and any thoughts or feelings that might have come up during the activity.**

Social Identity Wheel Activity

Debrief Questions

- Were you surprised by anything?

- Is there anything you'd like to share about your answers?

- Why is it important to critically reflect on our identities?

- What might be the value in doing activities like this with students?

Brain Break

Stretch

Snack

Hydrate

Rest

Developing Strategies

for creating a welcoming and affirming environment

Create a welcoming and affirming environment by:

- Building positive relationships with students and families
- Creating an inclusive culture
- Using effective behavior strategies

Building positive relationships

With students:

- Show students you care about them as individuals

- Aim for 5 positive interactions to every 1 negative or "neutral" interactions

- Interrogate your implicit biases or assumptions

With families:

- Use families' preferred communication methods in their preferred language

- Communicate positive news

- Ask about their child's interests, culture, and academic experiences

- Engage in the local community

Creating an inclusive culture

- Teach students about diverse identities and the benefits of diversity.

- Evaluate the learning environment and learning materials for diverse representations.

- Help students learn conversational skills for asking questions or voicing disagreements.

- Intervene when students are disrespectful or say hurtful things.

- Let students know that it's okay to make mistakes (academically and socially) - it's part of the learning process.

Using effective behavior strategies

- Co-create, explicitly teach, and frequently review class rules and expectations.

- Explicitly teach and integrate social-emotional learning strategies.

- Pause and question your initial reactions to a student's behavior.

- Review school policies and demographic data to see which students may be disproportionately impacted.

- Instead of exclusionary discipline practices, use restorative practices.

Discussion

- Which of these practices do you find most useful or want to try?
- What do you want to learn more about?
- What would you add?
- What does it look like in your class?

Poll

Which area of practice do you most want to focus on improving?

- Building positive relationships with students and families
- Creating an inclusive culture
- Using more effective behavior strategies

Applying the strategies to your individual context

2 Activity Options

Activity

The Equity Rubric

- Examine individual skills and strategies for building positive relationships with students and families

- Assess utilization of identity-affirming strategies to create an inclusive environment

Mindfulness Reflection Process

- Reflect on interactions with students and responses to student behavior

The Equity Rubric

Overview

- This rubric is a tool for reflection and ongoing development.

- Pay attention to the emotions that surface when using this tool and explore what you can learn from them.

- This tool names indicators of equitable inputs. The true indicator of equity is revealed in the impact that a teacher and school have on students, and what students gain from being in that classroom and school, which includes skills, abilities, knowledge, thoughts, feelings, a sense of belonging, and a sense of potential.

Mindfulness Reflection Process

School staff will:

- Examine their own assumptions, prejudices, and biases and consider how they affect their interactions with and expectations of their students

- Objectively describe behaviors without interpretation or evaluation to consider alternative explanations

- Develop culturally and linguistically responsive and appropriate ways of responding to better support the student, family, or staff

Activity Directions

Choose 1 activity and follow the instructions below.

1. [Mindfulness Reflection Process](#)
   - Review the "Planning for it" tab
   - Complete the steps 1-3 in the "How to do it" section

2. [The Equity Rubric Link](#)
   - Complete sections 2, 3 and 8
   - Identify 3 areas of growth you want to work on over the next month

Discussion

- Do you find this type of self-reflection helpful? Why or why not?
- Did the activity raise any ideas that will inform your teaching practices?

Recap and Action Planning

for creating a welcoming and affirming environment

Welcoming and Affirming Learning Environments

What it looks like

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Ongoing Professional Learning

What it looks like

"Teaching and learning is an adaptive process needing **constant reexamination** (Moll, et al., 1992; Gay, 2010). It allows learners to develop and sharpen a critically conscious lens toward instruction, curriculum, assessment, history, culture, and institutions. **Learners must be self-directed and take on opportunities that directly impact learning outcomes.**"

Identifying your next steps

1. Read through the suggestions on the Ongoing Learning Options handout

2. Choose which learning activity you would like to complete in the next month.

3. Set a reminder on your calendar, planner, or phone.

Questions and Answers

Contact Us