RACE PROJECT KC

Culturally Responsive Teaching Toolkit

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*Please note that there is a corresponding video that corresponds with this toolkit and supports this learning opportunity. As an additional note, you will see the acronym CRT (culturally responsive teaching) in the video. This acronym refers to practices related to cultural responsiveness in teaching and leading, and is not related to critical race theory. *

1. Introduction: What is Culturally Responsive Teaching?

Culturally Responsive Teaching is an approach that honors students' identities, experiences, and cultural backgrounds as assets in the classroom. Rooted in the belief that learning happens most powerfully when students feel seen, heard, and valued. Culturally responsive teaching integrates academic rigor with practices of equity, belonging, and justice.

Culturally Responsive Teaching goes beyond strategies—it is a mindset and practice of:
- Recognizing and naming systemic inequities.
- Honoring diverse histories, stories, and ways of knowing.

- Building authentic relationships grounded in respect and empathy.
- Supporting social-emotional growth alongside academic achievement.

2. What Culturally Responsive Teaching IS and IS NOT

Culturally Responsive Teaching Is…
- A framework that integrates students' cultural identities into teaching and learning.
- A practice of co-creation where students are knowledge-holders, not empty vessels.
- Centered on equity, belonging, and inclusion.
- A tool for disrupting stereotypes, bias, and deficit-based narratives.
- A holistic approach to academic and social-emotional development.

Culturally Responsive Teaching is NOT…
- A checklist of multicultural activities.
- Simply celebrating holidays or food without addressing systemic inequities.
- A one-size-fits-all strategy.
- A way to discipline or control students.
- Tokenism or saviorism.

3. Journaling Prompts for Educators
- How do my cultural identities shape the way I show up in the classroom?
- When have I witnessed deficit-based narratives in schools, and how can I disrupt them?
- Whose voices are centered in my curriculum? Whose are missing?
- How do I balance care, rigor, and accountability with my students?
- What role does bias play in my instructional or disciplinary choices?

4. Culturally Responsive Teaching Glossary
Sample terms include:
- Funds of Knowledge (Moll, 1992)
- Cultural Humility
- Intersectionality
- Asset-Based Pedagogy
- Trauma-Informed & Healing-Centered Teaching
- Restorative Practices
- Linguistic Justice

5. Connecting Culturally Responsive Teaching to Race Project KC's Mission
Culturally responsive teaching practices align with the mission of Race Project KC, reinforcing:
- Collaboration and reflection.
- Student advocacy and voice.

- Diverse stories and histories.
- Community engagement.
- Equity-centered practices.

6. Instructional Practices Across Grade Levels
Elementary: Storytelling, art-based identity projects, honoring family histories.
Middle School: Inquiry-based learning around identity, power, and community.
High School: Critical dialogue, restorative justice circles, student-led teaching on issues of justice and access.

7. Educator Growth: Strengthening Culturally Responsive Competency
- Journal weekly about how culturally responsive teaching shows up in your practice and pedagogy. Consider how to implement and sustain these practices.
- Engage in peer dialogue around bias, identity, and teaching.
- Partner with community organizations (e.g. Race Project KC, Black Archives, Nelson, etc.)
- Reflect on your own schooling and how it shapes your assumptions.
- Integrate student voice into classroom decision-making.
- Continually examine and disrupt your biases through quality professional development and learning opportunities.

8. Tools for Fostering Strong Relationships
- Learn and pronounce students' names correctly.
- Connect with families and communities as partners.
- Use active listening and culturally affirming communication.
- Celebrate growth, not just achievement.
- Avoid saviorism.

9. Student Prompts & Creative Activities
- Write about a time you felt your identity celebrated in school.
- Draw or describe what "community" looks like for you.
- Share a cultural tradition, story, or recipe and its meaning.
- Create a poem, song, or story that reflects your background.

- Discuss how a historical or fictional figure from your culture demonstrated resilience, leadership, or justice.

10. Recommended Resources

- Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain (Zaretta Hammond)
- We Want to Do More Than Survive (Bettina Love)
- Equity-Centered Trauma-Informed Teaching (Alex Venet)
- CASEL Transformative SEL resources
- The Magnitude of Us (Marlee Bunch)

Closing Note

This toolkit is not meant to be exhaustive—it's a living resource. Culturally responsive teaching requires ongoing reflection, community dialogue, and a willingness to adapt as students' needs and contexts evolve. We thank you for the important work you do to ensure that all students, families, and community members have opportunities to learn and grow. Should you have any questions or need support, please feel free to reach out.