Culturally Responsive Plan: Understanding Who We Are and Who We Are Teaching

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A culturally responsive environment means that all parties are invested. I imagine walking through a school where students are engaged, teachers are exciting and learning is happening. I hope for an environment where we can create not only an enthusiasm for learning but also an enthusiasm for teaching. Ideally, my culturally responsive plan will help to slowly assimilate my building into an environment of acceptance, unity and appreciation. The difficulty for me in this assignment is fully grasping and understanding the idea of systemic racism and how the system is rife with it. In my experiences, personally, growing up in poverty in a rural area, not having a father present, and being bullied, I have a bit of an issue with being tagged with Whited privilege. So this experience was a bit emotional for me, to the point that I went in and figured how it would affect my grade if I didn't do the assignment. However, educational leadership does not allow you to pick and choose your battles. I laid down more hours on this project than any other, digging through external resources, reading testimonials, interviews, and watching documentaries. But I feel that all the invested time paid off. My plan is realistic, takes into consideration the current culture and climate of the school and is an implementation timeline that allows each member of the faculty/staff to come to terms with what they need to in order for this initiative to be authentic and successful.

What did you learn?

I learned that this could be a huge area of growth for me. It is something that I will return to every single week of this program because it is a process; no matter how much I would like to believe that I am self-actualized and above the critical reflection stage of this, I am not. The NAESP tells us that leaders have to understand their own identities as individuals, family members, a part of a family tree, genealogy and our social and political constructs before we can

lead a group of people to do this (NAESP, n.d.). I learned after doing this project, after going through the desire to deep dive, the subtle questions in my head as I would lay down at night, that I have some work to do and the best course of action is to attack all of it now.

This is one of those things that feels like it is something that we should have been doing all along. After all, we are told that it is rooted in differentiated learning principles (Prodigy Education, 2021). Teachers who have been in the classroom for at least the last five years have been differentiating on the fly or "ninja teaching." But this culturally responsive teaching is more than just differentiation; it is an understanding of the background, the etiology of a student. I learned that for all of my prowess at differentiation, I had not begun the process of critical examination of myself. I learned that this is going to be a looming, intricate task for me, and I learned that I can start practicing it every day in the classroom.

How will this experience benefit you as a future administrator?

I am going to spend time each week as I traverse this program doing critical reflection. I have ordered the Culturally Responsive Playbook and I will do the study. I plan on doing all of the steps of the plan except for building a task force – I probably need the actual authority of a principal to do that. But I will implement and test my plan on myself.

As an administrator, this culturally responsive environment is exactly the type of climate I want in my school. I want parents and community members to feel like they can drop in, participate in instructional walks with me, learn and see what we are doing. I want feedback and involvement. I want to support both new and veteran teachers as they endeavor to work the plan I have created. Understanding that there are structures we can put in place to make students more successful is what I will bring to the table and leadership skills are what I have to offer. I will understand how to make decisions on disciplinary measures, curriculum, and overall school

climate. This exercise has made me understand the type of leader that I must become in order to be an effective instructional leader.

How is this activity aligned to the literature (research) and the NELP Standards?

In the Edutopia video, we learn that the Amigos School initiative to be culturally responsive resulted in a 20 percent increase above the state average in testing (Edutopia, 2020). According to the NELP Standards, program completers will exhibit competency in a variety of areas including Standard 3:

Standard Three: Equity, Inclusiveness and Cultural Responsiveness

Candidates who successfully complete a building level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to develop and maintain a supportive, equitable, culturally responsive and inclusive school culture.

Component 3.1 Program completers understand and demonstrate capacity to evaluate, design, cultivate, and advocate for a supportive and inclusive school culture.

Component 3.2 Program completers understand and demonstrate capacity to evaluate, cultivate, and advocate for equitable access to educational resources and opportunities that support the educational success and well-being of each student.

Component 3.3 Program completers understand and demonstrate capacity to evaluate, cultivate, and advocate for equitable, inclusive and culturally responsive instruction and behavior support practices among teachers and staff.

RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR STANDARDS THREE:

Evidence presented in Appendix 3 in support of Standard 3 confirms that a building-level education leader must have the knowledge and skills to promote the success of every student through developing and maintaining a supportive, equitable, responsive and inclusive school culture. This includes the capacity to evaluate, cultivate, and advocate for a supportive and inclusive school culture; equitable access to educational resources, procedures and opportunities; and equitable instructional and behavior support practices among teachers and staff. This research evidence was used to inform the development of Standard 3 and components 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3.

References

Edutopia. (2020, June 18). *Supporting schoolwide culturally responsive practice*. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ztnwmVBMfd0

NPBEA. (2018). National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Program Standards - Building Level. Retrieved from: www.npbea.org.

Prodigy Education. (2021, October 6). *Culturally responsive teaching: Definition, strategies & examples*. Culturally Responsive Teaching: Definition, Strategies & Examples | Prodigy Education. https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/blog/culturally-responsive-teaching/