

Wisconsin's Model to Inform Culturally Responsive Practices



Outer Circle: Guiding impulses of Culturally Responsive Practice:

1. **Will: Desire to Lead** - Often the main impetus for us becoming educators.
2. **Fill: Gain Cultural knowledge** - Referring to the invaluable work of learning more about our students.
3. **Skill: Apply Knowledge** - Using our desire to lead and new cultural understanding to engage more students, more often.

Inner Circle: Specific steps to the “Will-Fill-Skill” process:

1. **Become self-aware:** Doing the difficult, but necessary work of reflection. Addressing our own cultural biases, and planning to actively override them in our classrooms. This is the first step to activating our human empathy to meet the social-emotional needs of our students, protecting their dignity, and preventing prejudice from poisoning our practice.
2. **Examine the system’s impact on families & students:** Our current Problem of Practice speaks directly to this point. As educators, we need to be honest about the realities, past and present, of education in our city, acknowledging that it up to us to threaten inequity in our spheres of influence.
3. **Believe all students will learn:** Surely, most, if not all of us would say so, but do our professional practices truly reflect this, especially when faced with challenging student behaviors and perceived apathy? A key component of trauma-sensitive schools centers on this growth mindset, that every student we see has skills, and we should seek to maximize their efforts through responsiveness. As Dr. Ladson-Billings asserts, all students deserve to experience success.
4. **Understand we all have unique identities & worldviews:** Responsive educators take time to get to know their students personally, and how each of them sees the world. Without building and sustaining nurturing relationships with them, we close a door to our students’ growth.
5. **Know the communities:** The next step to gaining cultural knowledge and activating our critical consciousness involves meeting the students where they are. We should seek ways to engage with our students and families in an authentic way, especially if their cultural lenses differ from our own.
6. **Lead, model, and advocate for equity practices:** We are ALL agents of social change. As we move to apply the knowledge we gain, we must build our skills and use our voices and talents to promote equity in our schools. That means challenging the status quo, not shying away from the courageous conversations necessary to change practices that fail our students, and “showing up” for our students in word and deed.
7. **Accept institutional responsibility:** We are in charge of what happens in our schools; we are responsible for our students’ safety, and the quality of their academic opportunities. As culturally responsive practitioners, we should do our best to prepare students for the many social and intellectual challenges that the world has for them. We owe it to our students and their families to give them our best whenever we can.
8. **Use practices and curriculum that respect students’ cultures:** From planning to assessment to re-teaching, we should consider the lives of our students. Why? Simply put, children remember what they care about! If we fail to make content culturally accessible and connect it to their lives, we cannot expect the results we seek. For example, opportunities are lost if we operate only from, individualized, or teacher-centric, or even Eurocentric mindsets. Students should be the focus of our work, and we should be thoughtful and innovative in our approach.