

## **Standard II** **Element B**

### **LEVEL 1 PRACTICES**

#### **THE TEACHER:**

- 1 ***Acknowledges the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomics, and other aspects of culture on student perspectives.***

Acknowledging racial diversity is one of the basic elements of [culturally responsive pedagogy](#). As Lisa Delpit (2006) states, “If one does not see color, then one does not really see children” (p. 177). To this end, the teacher must be knowledgeable of the socio-historical and racial experiences that lead to students’ perspectives and how these impact student thinking and learning. Once the teacher displays value for each student’s perspectives, she can foster an environment that allows students to feel safe sharing their beliefs and opinions. This is the foundation for creating a positive learning environment, which allows students to be receptive to the diverse perspectives of others.

While students should also be recognized and respected for who they are individually, (i.e. who they are as defined by the characteristics they possess), students must also be recognized and respected for who they are as part of the groups to which they belong. Thus, at a minimum, when we think about diversity, we need to consider not only race but gender, religion, physical challenges, economic status, age, disability, sexual orientation, and learning differences.

Respect for [diversity](#) is essential for the existence of a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. The teacher who respects and appreciates the diversity of students in the classroom validates and acknowledges the experiences, language, and traditions of linguistically or culturally diverse students. Students who are caring and respectful of others’ cultural backgrounds and family structures are more likely to take pride in their own work and the work of their peers.

In the real world, all students will encounter people from diverse backgrounds. Learning about diversity helps students learn more about themselves as they examine the similarities and differences in other cultures and points of view. In turn, this exposure adds to the breadth of knowledge that a good teacher attempts to create. It also allows students to understand why people are different but still able to live in harmony. When a teacher commits to respect and does so with a complete passion for his or her students, only one result is possible: learning for all children. (Midobuche, 1999, p. 81)

Developing [cultural sensitivity](#) is one of the first steps towards creating an environment in which diversity is respected. Knowing the nuances and customs of a particular culture, in addition to the artifacts of the culture, is critical to developing cultural sensitivity.

...culture consistently shapes an individual’s behavior and reactions to the behaviors of others. Gaining insight into cultural values and habits helps teachers monitor their reactions to student behaviors that they might deem “negative,” but that are considered normal or even valued in the student’s home culture. Without such reflection, a teacher’s implicit assumptions can inadvertently communicate to students a lack of caring. (Bondy & Ross, 2008, p. 56)

The only way to gain fluency, comfort and ease is through genuine relationships in which we learn how to talk to and about people whom we perceive as different, often learning that many of our initial

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assumptions or judgments were, in fact, erroneous. The goal is not to make differences invisible (“I don’t see color”; It’s such a good inclusive classroom, you can’t tell who the kids with disabilities are”) but to develop the language and skills to negotiate diversity. Classrooms cannot feel safe to anyone if discussions of difference are avoided, discouraged, or considered inappropriate. (Sapon-Shevin, 2008, p. 50)

*Refer to these external resources for additional information:*

- Article: “Colorblind Education is the ‘Wrong Response’ published by Education Week  
<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2015/08/26/colorblind-education-is-the-wrong-response.html>  
Article discusses how the well-intentioned ‘colorblind’ approach to teaching diverse students can have the effect of making diverse students’ experiences and perceptions invisible. A better approach is to use curriculum and instruction that is explicit about race and the impact of racism in schools and society in order to promote diverse students’ sense of belonging and well-being.
- Article: “Cultural Learning Styles: Should Students’ Culture Inform Instructional Choices?” published by Teaching as Leadership  
[http://teachingasleadership.org/sites/default/files/Related-Readings/DCA\\_Ch7\\_2011.pdf](http://teachingasleadership.org/sites/default/files/Related-Readings/DCA_Ch7_2011.pdf)  
Article discusses how culture impacts the way in which students learn, and how teachers can differentiate instruction based on these learning preferences.
- Article: “Addressing Diversity in Schools: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy” published by the Center for Nationally Responsive Cultural Educational Systems, SNCCREST  
[http://www.niusileadscape.org/docs/FINAL\\_PRODUCTS/NCCRESt/practitioner\\_briefs/%95%20EMPLATE/DRAFTS/AUTHOR%20revisions/annablis%20pracbrief%20templates/Diversity\\_Brief\\_highres.pdf](http://www.niusileadscape.org/docs/FINAL_PRODUCTS/NCCRESt/practitioner_briefs/%95%20EMPLATE/DRAFTS/AUTHOR%20revisions/annablis%20pracbrief%20templates/Diversity_Brief_highres.pdf)  
Article explains how teachers can become culturally responsive in their relationships with students and in their instruction.

Colorado classrooms are composed of students from many different cultures, languages, races, and backgrounds. This type of variety can enrich the lives of students. When teachers provide opportunities for students to engage in discussions with their peers and participate in collaborative learning activities, they support a learning environment that values individuals’ perspectives. The benefits to these learning experiences are:

- Students learn to work with different types of individuals.
- Students learn to respect and value peers’ individual differences.
- Students interact more freely with their peers because they feel safe from ridicule, put-downs, and bullying.
- The class develops a sense of community and trust in which all students feel valued and respected.

*Refer to this internal resource for additional information:*

- [Sentence Starters for Teaching Students Accountable Talk](#)  
Document provides examples of sentence starters that can be used for respectful dialogue.

*Refer to these external resources for additional information:*

- Article: “Appreciating and Valuing Diversity” site sponsored by North Central Collaboration for Education in Nondestructive Testing  
<http://www.ndt-ed.org/TeachingResources/ClassroomTips/Diversity.htm>  
Article provides ideas for how to teach students a respect for diversity.

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### *Planning/Coaching Questions*

- How were you able to obtain information on my students' cultures, backgrounds, and family structures?
- What changes in procedures or structures will you need to employ to acknowledge the influence of various aspects of background on student perspectives?
- What instructional approaches and materials did you use that reflect students' backgrounds and enhance student learning?
- How did you develop a sense of community within the classroom?
- How were you able to provide opportunities for students to engage in effective interactions with their peers?
- How do you model a respect for individual differences and ensure students do the same?
- **How will you model and teach students to value diverse perspectives?**
- How do you capitalize on the diversity within your classroom?

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