

Using Cultural Capital to Support Latino Student Success in an Asset Rich Learning Environment

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About the Presenter: Orlando Ramos, Ed.D.

- High School Drop Out
- High School Teacher-7 years
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- Chief Academic Officer- Fes, Morocco
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The importance of what you do...

"If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them."

~Henry David Thoreau

- Each one of you, whether custodian, cafeteria worker, office worker, teacher, or administrator, is building a foundation of hope for our children

Regarding Change...

Not everything that is faced can be changed – but nothing can be changed until it is faced...

James Baldwin

Today's agenda...

- A little data...
- What is Cultural Capital?
- Deficit thinking
- As “Asset Rich Learning Culture”
- Viewing our students through a different lens
- Final thoughts

Data to Consider

- Currently, Latinos make up 53% of all children under the age of 6 and 52% of all infants born in California (School Matters: 2010)
- The number of Latino students nearly doubled between 1987 and 2010
- Latino students are the fastest growing but *least successful* ethnic group in education today
- By 2021 one out of every four students in our nation's public schools will be Latino... **California is NOW a Latino state: 52% of K-12 students are Latino**

More data to consider

- In some urban areas, as many as **50%** of Latino students drop out of high school
- Latinos currently make up almost 10 million students in our nation's schools and are 17% of all secondary students (NCLR)
- The conversation should focus not on whether the 17% will attend college...but about which one they will attend

Remember...

**Demographics
Do Not
Determine
Destiny**

The value of culture and diversity...

When content, concepts, and events are *studied from many points of view*, all of our students will be ready to play their roles in the life of the nation. They can help to transform the United States from what it is to what it could and should be...many groups working together to build a strong nation that celebrates its diversity

James Banks,
Professor

What is Cultural Capital (Cultural Value)?

There are different definitions but essentially cultural capital is the “toolkit” of skills, habits, and strategies with which students construct an ability to succeed in school...in other words...their resources. Often overlooked in schools and classrooms

Our children do not arrive in school with an “empty slate”...they bring value with them...

Cultural Value...

- Has been shown in a “short-term” study to improve minority student performance, thus closing the racial achievement gap
- Negative stereotype’s or “stereotype threat” aimed at one’s group can inhibit academic performance in minority students
- Values affirmation acts as a catalyst to permit the positive forces in schools to have a greater impact than negative stereotypes
- Values affirmation exercises are meant to bolster a students self-integrity

Communities of Color Cultural Wealth

— Tara Yosso – “Whose Culture has Capital?”

- Aspirational Capital: *resiliency and ability to nurture hopes and dreams*
- Linguistic Capital: *intellectual and communication skills used with multiple languages*
- Familial Capital: *produced and maintained by family members*
- Social Capital: *people and community resources*
- Navigational Capital: *ability to maneuver through systems that are often hostile to people of color*
- Resistant Capital: *knowledge and skills used to challenge inequality and oppression*

Cultural Modeling: How teachers use students cultural knowledge in the classroom – C.J. Lee

- Three basic sources:
 1. **Positioning students as sources of authority to use their firsthand knowledge to solve academic problems**
 2. **Selection of texts that deal with problems that students face in their day-to-day environments**
 3. **Privileging students' knowledge as intellectually rich and valuable in the learning process thus reversing the manner in which many schools tend to devalue it**

Cultural Value...self affirmation

- Caring relationships provide the mutual appreciation needed for self-affirmation
- Students require both respect and access to reach their life goals
- Dignity is what is at stake in human relationships
- Appreciate and accept differences rather than merely tolerating them
- Compassion, care, and responsiveness must become central to addressing issues of race, culture, and social justice

What is all this talk about social justice? Mapping the terrain of education's latest catchphrase, Connie North, 2008

Cultural Capital...Cultural Value

- Turn to your neighbor and discuss the following question of the day....
- **What does “Positive Cultural Capital – Cultural Value” look like in your classroom or school?**

“It all begins with attitude...”

“The key here is not the kind of instruction *but the attitude underlying it*. When teachers (and administrators) do not understand the potential of the students they teach, they will under-teach them no matter what the methodology”

Lisa Delpit – *Other People’s Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*

How do we see our students?

Viewing our children through a different lens...deficit thinking fails to do this...

Throughout the world, bilingualism is the norm... here we view non-English speakers simply as “people who don’t yet speak English” – deficit thinking

Professor Ofelia Garcia

Teachers College, Columbia University, 2008

Deficit thinking...

Deficit thinking = Focuses on what is wrong or lacking

- Blaming the victim, *“families are at fault”*
- Change is hard to create because of a general feeling of “nothing can be done”
- Creates a mentality of never being able to rise above the current level
- For example...

Deficit thinking...

- *Limited* English Proficient (D)
 - Definition of *limited* (**confined within limits; lacking breadth or originality**) Websters Dictionary
- English Language *Learners* (D)
 - Focus is on “Don’t yet speak English”
- On the other hand we have *Emergent bilinguals* (A)
 - **“Learning to and will speak ‘two languages’”**
- In the case of Latinos in California – from *minority* to ***Emerging Majority*** (A)

Critical questions to ask ourselves...

- How can we change the manner in which we attack cultural deficit thinking and the inequity it brings?
- We can begin to address deficit thinking and educational inequity through changing the manner in which we think about our students. For instance...consider this next statement...

Supt. Jack O'Connell, Jan. 22, 2008 State of Education, P-16 Council Theme #2

- “Clearly it is time to move past the discomfort of talking about culture and race. It is time to move past the illusion that we live in a color-blind society. Whether we know it or not, an attempt to be color-blind can feel to a student of color like a rejection of the student’s culture and experience
- Our schools cannot create a climate that is supportive of all students unless they first understand the perceptions, impressions, beliefs, and expectations of a school’s students, teachers, and staffs.”

For all kids...

- Reject the myth of “color-blindness”
- Culturally and racially just schools: respect, value, and know their students. The adults know who their students are...**and care for them**
- Relationships are not a “touchy feely” perspective. They are a critical component towards student success (Voices from the Inside Report)

For all kids...

- Keeping our kids in school depends on relationships...among peers and with the adults on campus
- Place race, culture, and gender discussions at the center of changing school culture
- Students want to know...who really cares?

For all kids...

- The *assumption* is that most educators enter the profession believing that *every child has the right to learn, whatever the child's race, culture, or economic class...student learning is at the heart of everything*
- Why is this so important? *Because We're losing our children in spite of this assumption! Dropouts and Prison*
- How do we begin? *Change the way we see our children (stereotypes, values affirmation...develop trust)*

The destination...

- Examine your own beliefs *from the Inside Out*. However, it's not just about consciousness raising and awareness...it's about *action/praxis: Do Something!*
- The destination: An Asset Rich Learning Culture

As “Asset Rich Learning Culture...”

- Values and affirms what “all” children bring to school
- Builds on student assets rather than on *perceived* deficits
- As an example: recognize *emerging bilinguals* as students capable of being educated deeply as well as a national resource

What to do...Praxis (action)

- Don't assume deficits in students – locate, teach, and lead to strengths
- Develop Professional Development opportunities to learn how to negate “deficit thinking” (blaming the victim)
- Increase your knowledge about the power of culture in education in order to become more culturally competent (the ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures)

Be a transformative leader and teacher

Help students change the way they see themselves as learners and the self-assessment of their ability to be academically successful

Remember...an Asset Rich Learning Culture is...

Schools where all students *are expected to, and do, succeed*

Glenn Singleton, *Courageous Conversations About Race*

Final thoughts...

1. Professional development activities must systematically and explicitly link social justice and equity knowledge to classroom practices
2. Professional development in diversity is not just for White educators
3. Institutionalize daily cultural knowledge
4. Develop adaptations to teaching and leading in order to reflect an understanding of race, equity, and diversity within and between cultures
5. Understand that diversity and equity are not the same thing

Russell Ackoff – *Redesigning Society*

“The only thing harder than starting something new – is stopping something old”

How do I begin?

Do the right thing for all kids...do those things for kids that you know you should be doing...and be consistently courageous enough to do them

Suggested Resources

- Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic: Critical Race Theory, An Introduction
- Shernaz B. Garcia, Patricia Guerra: *Deconstructing deficit thinking – working with educators to create more equitable learning environments*
- Sonia Nieto: *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*
- Catherine Marshall, Maricela Oliva: *Leadership for Social Justice: Making Revolutions in Education*
- George Theoharis: *The School Leaders Our Children Deserve*

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As people and as educational leaders...

Everything now, we must assume, is in our hands; we have no right to assume otherwise. If we do not falter in our duty now, we may be able, handful that we are, to end the racial nightmare, and achieve our country, and change the history of the world

James Baldwin – “The Fire Next Time”