

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE TOOLS

Vol. 1 | Teaching and Learning
Institute for Latino Educational Achievement | Goshen College



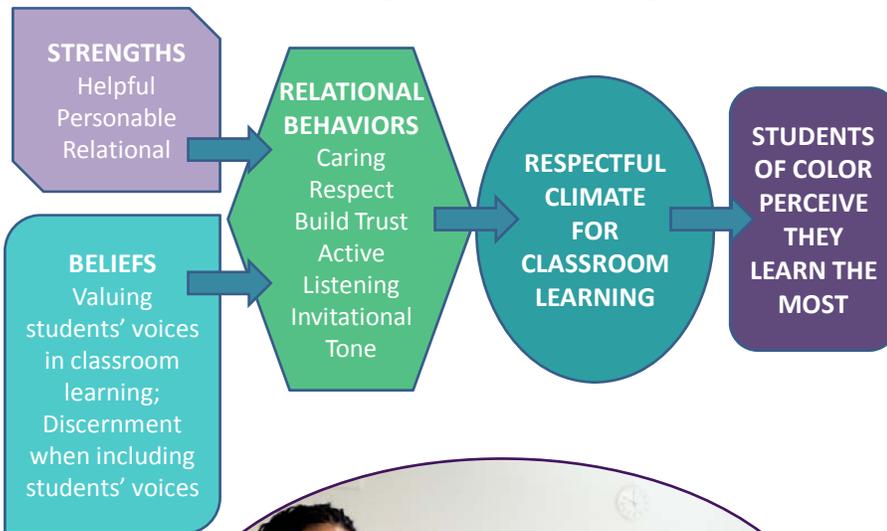
Creating Culturally Relevant Spaces for Respectful Intercultural Teaching and Learning

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African American (8) and **Latino** (11) students described the professor who helped him or her to learn the most in college. **14 different professors** representing 12 disciplines were identified. Through classroom observations and interviews, the study examined professors' **strengths, attitudes, and behaviors** that were most supportive of the learning of students of color. Collectively, findings from this research are offered to advance the **transformational work** of colleges and universities who are striving to be effective facilitators of intercultural teaching and learning.

Emerging Model for Intercultural Teaching and Learning



Culturally responsive teaching...

"...using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002, p. 160).

Varying cultures of students are viewed as an asset, rather than an impediment to learning (Chen, Nimmo & Fraser, 2009).

Cultural knowledge, curriculum design, instructional strategies, cultural caring, classroom community, cross-cultural communications, and cultural congruity (aligning instructional techniques with learning styles) are avenues through which culturally responsive teaching can impact learning in the classroom (Gay, 2000).

Students' Perspective on the Prof That Helped Them Learn the Most

Prof took a personal interest in me | Organized, but flexible

PROFESSORS' STRENGTHS | Personable --a cross-cutting theme

...definitely personable. Very encouraging, that's one thing that I felt helped me a lot.
-Susan, African American

African American

Approach to Teaching

- Organized
- Strategic
- Spontaneous, Flexible, Adaptable

Disposition

- Fun to be around
- Great sense of humor, Cheery
- Personable, Nice
- Always in a good mood
- Helpful

Interpersonal

- Interactive
- Conversational
- Shared personal stories
- Easy to talk to
- Gets to know students
- Encouraging
- Has confidence in me



...he was one of the first professors that I felt cared about who I was as a student, but also how I was doing in college, in general. So that's been encouraging to have that kind of support in a classroom. -Anita, Latina

Latino /Latina

Approach to Teaching

- Passionate about subject and teaching
- Good facilitator of conversation
- Speaks in clear terms, Concise
- Consistent teaching style
- Knowledgeable
- Organized

Disposition

- Fun
- Comfortable to be around
- Understanding
- Encouraging
- Accessible
- Personable
- Laid-back
- Good personality
- Energetic
- Spontaneous
- Soft-spoken

Student-Centered

- Attentive to students
- Believes in me
- Wants me to succeed
- Willing to help all students regardless of ethnicity
- Very open and culturally sensitive to me as a Latino student
- Takes an interest in me academically and personally
- Prof sees my talents and what I can give to GC
- Helpful with my future plans

BEHAVIORS | What professors do...

African American

- Creates a climate for respect
- Flexible and open
- Careful description
- Cares for students on multiple levels: academic work, college success, overall well being
- Makes connections with various dimensions of my life

Latino/ Latina

- Broke down concepts and explained terms
- Focuses on students
- Clear connection between classroom activities
- Cares for students on multiple levels: academic work and overall well being
- Organized, but flexible
- Shows respect

EMOTIONAL CLIMATE | What it feels like to be in this professor's class...

African American

- Excited
- Comfortable

Latino/ Latina

- Excited
- Did not dread
- Looked forward to...
- Comfortable

...every time I go to one of her classes I'm happy. I'm just full of energy because it's rejuvenating...going into a class with her and listening to what she has to say because she's kind of a genius in... making people feel very comfortable.

-Andrew, Latino

Students noted ways professors made the classroom comfortable: valuing students' opinions, intentionally making everyone feel engaged in the class, and making the classroom environment welcoming.

Professors' Perspective | Relational --a cross-cutting theme

Nearly all professors in the study talked about life experiences giving them exposure to cultures other than their own and how these experiences enlarged their empathy for students of color in the classroom. Living abroad, engaging in intercultural training, and interacting with people from various ethnic groups were some of the noted experiences.

PROFESSORS' STRENGTHS

Empathy for students of color | **Being a person of color** | **Approachable** | **Hard-working**
| **Student-centered** | **Accepting** | **Caring** | **Pastoral** | **Care about subject** | **Passionate** |
Making content relevant | **Authentic** | **Consistent** | **Creative** | **Curious** | **"People" person**
| **Practical** | **Systematic** | **Goal-oriented** | **Trained in teaching** | **Organized** | **Energetic** | **Animated** |
Open | **Performance, Humor** | **Articulate** | **Honest** | **Intercultural experiences**

*And so partly my personality, of being **friendly** and **outgoing** and **accepting**, I think helps me to connect with students. I would hope that they would feel that no matter what they're going through, where they're from, what they're dealing with, that **I care about them**.* -Helen, a professor

BEHAVIORS

Pre-class

- Significant prep time to teach
- Constructs learning goals, rubrics
- Post slides ahead of time
- Set-up early, greet students as they arrive

Beginnings

- Organizing announcements
- Devotional at the beginning of class
- Set expectations early
- Set a tone of classroom community at the beginning of the semester
- Built trust

Student-Focused

- Respond to student learning needs
- Linger after class for questions
- E-mail communication often
- Meet with students outside of class
- Talk to each student during class
- Participate with students in class
- Initiate with students when their performance is inconsistent
- Know and use names

Attentiveness

- Honest, authentic, attentive listening
- Eye contact
- Tries not to talk too much in class

Feedback

- Encourage students to share audibly
- Prompt feedback on papers
- Intellectualize rather than personalize problems students might have

Movement

- Gestures, walk around
- Classroom presence: "big personality" "whole body endeavor"
- Voice inflection

Other...

- Good at explaining

Culturally Responsive

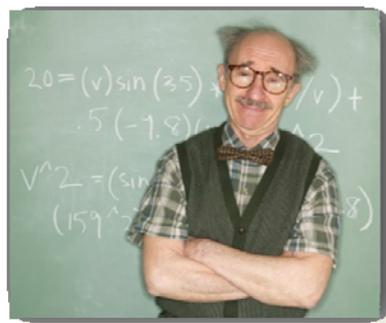
- Check with students ahead of time to see it's okay to call on them to share a cultural perspective
- Get to know students of color individually
- Incorporate culturally diverse visuals and texts



ATTITUDES & BELIEFS

- All students can learn and succeed
- Students make valuable contributions to classroom learning
- Passionate about bridging content to students' lives

Professors believed that each student has something of value to contribute to class. They viewed the voices of students as an essential part of classroom learning and they were committed to creating a climate for interaction and sharing. Professors used discernment when inviting students of color to contribute their rich cultural knowledge in the classroom.



CENTER FOR INTERCULTURAL
AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

Teaching Practices & Strategies

INTERPERSONAL

small group work | assign groups |
rules for group work | students
teaching each other | working in
pairs | peer evaluation | study
groups

STUDENT VOICES

incorporate all student voices | open-
ended questions | written responses
| wait after asking a question | call
on students, but give them a "pass" |
invitational tone



CLASSROOM CLIMATE

assign biographical letter to get to
know students | self-care plans |
early "mixing" | culturally relevant
texts | track and vary teaching
strategies and assessments

Culturally Responsive Teaching

- ◆ Honoring cultural differences vs. seeing all students the same
- ◆ Invitational tone to create a respectful classroom climate for learning
- ◆ Discernment when inviting the rich cultural knowledge of students of color to be shared in the classroom
- ◆ Recognizing that all students are diverse in some way
- ◆ Providing space for all students' stories to intersect with the classroom content
- ◆ Gratitude in teaching culturally diverse students - diverse classrooms enrich learning
- ◆ Teaching viewed as: Empowering students; Opening doors of opportunity; Promoting success; Welcoming and including—helping students overcome feelings of being an outsider
- ◆ Awareness of cultural dynamics in the classroom
- ◆ Awareness of one's White-ness and how this might impact the learning of students of color
- ◆ Responsibility of the institution to help students of color to be successful
- ◆ Build trust up-front, at the beginning of the semester

References and Resources

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This research was part of a larger project of the Center for Intercultural Teaching and Learning, Goshen College, Goshen, IN, funded by a grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. Grant No. 2006 1434-000.