**Becoming a Culturally Responsive Teacher**

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Part I

The classrooms of the twenty-first century will include a multicultural group of students from diverse backgrounds. This creates a golden opportunity for instructors to reexamine their instructional methods and pedagogy. Join me in this first Podcast in unfolding what it means to be a culturally responsive teacher.

"*I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel. “ ~Maya Angelou~*

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 Hello, I am Essie Childers a professor at Blinn College and a Partner for Cengage

Learning. Welcome to “Becoming a Culturally Responsive Teacher.” In this brief Podcast, I want to discuss the culture iceberg, high school vs. college culture and stereotyping.

Classrooms of the twenty-first century will be more diverse than ten years ago. Just take a look around in your classroom. Educators have an awesome task of creating an environment that will foster and enhance learning in a multicultural classroom. Faculty must understand the role of culture in learning. Skip Downing states that enrolling in college is like moving to a foreign country. Think about that for a moment. The culture of higher education is different from other cultures students have known—even the culture of high school.

 As you know, some traits of culture are quite visible. Others are not so visible. Picture in your mind an iceberg. In relation to culture, the tip of the iceberg is visible. Surface culture includes the spoken language, food, fashion, music, etc. What faculty cannot see is below the tip of the iceberg. This hidden culture represents a student’s beliefs, attitudes, opinions, world views, and so forth. So, research indicates that culture is a gathering of surface and deep level beliefs.

 Therefore, when students enter your classroom from different backgrounds ages, religion and nationalities they experience a culture shock. Now add to this the culture shock new rules, procedures, learning formats, and new language specific to the course they are taking. So, the question for us is, “How can we reach those deep levels to help connect with our students?” This is a good question to ponder.

When faculty become culturally responsive and aware, they will look for opportunities to help students understand the course, course catalogue, prerequisites, importance of creating an educational plan, grade point average, identifying a major, visiting with faculty during their office hours and other college customs that fosters success. As stated earlier, there are numerous differences between the high school culture and college culture. One big difference is personal responsibility.

Steve Schommer of San Diego City College, CA states, “Students are often shocked by the need to take on personal responsibility for so many things: time management, decision-making, problem solving, completing assignments, etc. It’s time to grow up a bit and learn some adult responsibilities. Some are ready for it and embrace it, others are not.” Can you relate to Steve’s comment? I certainly can. We want students successfully engaged in class which promotes motivation and retention.

Being a culturally responsive teacher means being able to respect and appreciate the deep culture aspects of all students. Where there is a void of culturally responsive instruction, a well-planned activity can go sour. Consider the scenario below.

In a writing class, students have been asked to write a story about their Thanksgiving meal. The students are very diverse ranging from the ages of 17-25. They are in college for the first time and begin to share what they will write about in their story. Listen to their comments.

Beth: “In my story, I am going to list all the traditional foods we enjoy: turkey, dressing, greens, macaroni and cheese and sweet potato pie.

Jon: “Oh Beth, that sounds like some good eating. I am going to invite myself to your house. Sometimes, we have ham instead of turkey and we serve rice dressing.”

Adam: “Rice dressing!” “What kind of dish is that?” “Jon, you know you eat fried chicken on Thanksgiving. Adam laughs out loud. Beth and Jon, drop their pens and begin to stare at Adam.

The instructor was nearby and over hears the entire conversation. The instructor immediately used this as an opportunity to have a teachable moment about microaggressions—intentional or unintentional comments, sometimes derogatory to target a specific group. Culturally responsive instructors understand that they are the pulse of the class.

It is their responsibility to be aware of the different cultures and develop instructional avenues to celebrate diversity.

Part II of Becoming a Culturally Responsive Teacher will address the importance of choosing curriculum and incorporating activities to help all students feel safe, connected and engaged in the learning process.

Thank you for listening.