Culturally Responsive Teaching for Multilingual Learners

We dedicate this book to all the educators who work tirelessly for equitable and socially just education for their students and to the teachers, administrators, and educational support staff who faced the unexpected challenge of distance learning with tenacity, creativity, and empathy. Thank you for all you do.

Culturally Responsive Teaching for Multilingual Learners

Tools for Equity

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Foreword by Ayanna Cooper
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CORWIN

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Note From the Publisher: The authors have provided video and web content throughout the book that is available to you through QR (quick response) codes. To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

Videos may also be accessed at **https://resources.corwin.com/CulturallyResponsiveTeaching**

Use this hashtag for book discussions on Twitter: #CRTforMLs

Foreword

by Ayanna Cooper

Culture—what is it, exactly? What is equity? How do we define them? How similar or different are our definitions? More important than how we define them is what we do with them: how we preserve and respect them. How are culture and equity related to culturally responsive teaching? These are some of the questions posed in this book, along with answers that help move readers from understanding to unpacking the work that needs to be done.

Recent events have led us to reexamine our lives, our morals, and our identities as part of society. Between a global pandemic and the revitalization of the Black Lives Matter movement, access, equity, and compassion have weighed heavily on the hearts and minds of people who want to contribute positively to where we, as a people, are now and where we hope to be in the future. In striving to make positive contributions, it is important for educators of all students, but especially those who are from linguistically diverse backgrounds, to engage in continued learning. The exploration of culture and how it defines us is a never-ending journey that enriches who we are and how we engage with the world. Sydney Snyder and Diane Staehr Fenner provide this book to aid educators in critical reflection while equipping them with tools that will help them shape themselves and their learning communities to be more diverse, inclusive, and equitable.

GETTING COMFORTABLE WITH BEING UNCOMFORTABLE

Years ago, I had the opportunity to teach an undergraduate Diversity in Education course. I remember being excited for the semester to start and to meet my students. I also remember

a department chair warning me that this particular course was difficult to teach and that students could be resistant. With that warning in mind, I wanted to be prepared for a potentially unreceptive environment; I wanted to find a fun and relevant way to facilitate an ice breaker.

The ice breaker started off with me having everyone, myself included, take off their shoes and put them on the opposite foot. My students' footwear included high heels, flip flops, cowboy boots, and tennis shoes. I asked them to do a couple of stomps, as if marching in place; balance on one foot, then the other; spin around to the left and then to the right; and then stop, face forward. I then asked my students, "How do you feel?" They said they felt awkward, silly, confused, pained, annoyed, and, most important, curious why we were doing this activity. I said, "Welcome to diversity in education!" I explained that throughout the semester, we'd embark on a number of topics and, at some point, they would probably experience these same uncomfortable feelings. I assured them that this was part of the discovery process and that they needed to hang in there and be open to learning. I wrote the list of their feelings on the board and kept it for the entire semester, referring to it every time we needed a reminder.

THE ICEBERG ANALOGY

That same advice is appropriate for this book. Snyder and Staehr Fenner invite educators to learn about culture—not only the culture of multilingual learners but also one's own culture. They help readers define and sharpen their understanding of equity and what it means to provide access. They also pose the notion that school communities have their own cultures in which we, as participants, interact while still owning our own cultures.

What happens when multiple cultures are merged, even temporarily? Picture culture as an iceberg; we can only see the small portion above the water and not what is beneath. Now picture three icebergs—one that represents a multilingual learner, another representing a teacher, and the other a school.

We only see the tops of those icebergs, so we don't see how deep or wide they truly are, and we don't know whether they are connected to one another. When pieces of icebergs break off or crash into each other, what happens to the remnants? We do know that icebergs can coexist, stay frozen, melt, or merge, depending on the environment. What kind of environment is needed for the best outcomes? This book affirms that we can, like icebergs, successfully coexist while maintaining our own forms.

DISPELLING THE MYTH: THE ILLUSION OF INCLUSION

Learning communities have been working toward being more welcoming of diversity for decades. With the push for more multicultural books, resources, curriculum, and pedagogical practices, the field of education has evolved, and we've seen it: welcome signs in multiple languages, potlucks in which you bring a dish from your culture, and vision and mission statements that profess antiracism. But it must go further. Our embrace of diversity should be exemplified in our daily practices and actions. We can't allow ourselves to believe that once we do something, anything that promotes diversity, that it is enough. We can avoid the *illusion of inclusion* by getting to the core of our beliefs and acting upon it. Snyder and Staehr Fenner do this by helping us understand why culturally responsive teaching matters and how to build our capacity to become more culturally competent practitioners.

When we see and hear things that make us or our colleagues uncomfortable, such as microaggressions, how and when do we address them? For example, what should we do when we see educators change the names of multilingual learners to more American-sounding names or when derogatory assumptions are made about where multilingual learners are coming from and why they are here in the United States? Truly embracing diversity means welcoming all of our multilingual learners and their families. An example of this was when an elementary school at which I taught changed its annual Cinco de Mayo celebration to a more inclusive celebration of all the

cultures represented by its teachers, students, and families. Positive and intentional changes are made when we evaluate and dismantle barriers that exist in our schools, such as deficit mindsets and low expectations, in order to assure access for all students. This book helps to create school communities that celebrate, elevate, and validate the lives and experiences of multilingual learners—this will take time and energy, but it will yield results beyond our expectations.

It is my hope that this book helps you get uncomfortable. How uncomfortable? That depends. Not so uncomfortable that you'll be immobilized (just stomp, balance, and spin), but enough for you to keep moving forward while also reflecting on what made you uncomfortable in the first place. Only you will know to what extent to engage and how far you'll go. What matters most is that this book helps educators to take steps, either individually or collectively, to create learning communities that are diverse, inclusive, and empowering for all.

Why We Wrote This Book

We work with school districts across North America to help teachers and administrators better support their English learners (ELs) and multilingual learners (MLs). One of our many services to districts is providing professional development (PD). Quite often, PD participants would like an assortment of fun activities and strategies to use with MLs in instruction. Some administrators request a one-day or half-day professional development session that will give teachers something to use in class the next day. We completely understand that approach, as we were once classroom teachers ourselves. We are firm believers that a little professional development is better than no professional development, even though we know that a few hours of strategies realistically won't move the needle significantly in terms of making positive changes to support MLs' equity and achievement.

While we recognize the need for effective instructional strategies that are engaging for students, we have also seen the urgent need to examine educators' beliefs about and expectations for MLs. We define MLs as students who speak or are exposed to a language in addition to English and students who may come from cultures that are different from the educators' own. We believe that we—and the educators we collaborate with—must focus on what is happening in the classroom context in which teaching is taking place, as well as expand our lenses to be aware of the larger contexts of school, district, state, and nation. Instructional strategies in and of themselves aren't the magic bullet to ensure MLs receive an equitable education. Through this book, we will take a deeper look at the practice of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) as a framework for changing educational outcomes for MLs and the steps needed to develop a culturally responsive climate in which all students' backgrounds, experiences, and cultures are honored and appreciated and diversity is commonly understood to make a school community stronger. It takes a more holistic, sustained approach that includes focusing on the culturally

responsive component to change practices in working with students and their families.

Prior to the publication of this book, our most recent book together was *Unlocking English Learners' Potential: Strategies for Making Content Accessible* (Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017). When we sent in the prospectus for that book, our wise editor Dan Alpert read it thoroughly and suggested we add a chapter on culture. In writing that chapter, we recognized that its inclusion was crucial in situating research-based strategies and academic language for ELs within the larger sociocultural context. As we worked with districts across North America in bringing the research and strategies of that book to life, we began noticing that culture was often left out of the equation when it came to teachers, administrators, schools, and districts who voiced a desire to improve equity for MLs. In our work, we would sometimes hear PD participants espouse a deficit perspective of multilingual learners while at the same time expressing the desire to start with a strengths- or assets-based perspective of their MLs. We knew we were ready to write our next book, and when deciding on the topic for this book, the one you're holding right now, we decided there was so much to unpack in that original culture chapter that it warranted its own focus.

With a teacher workforce that is primarily monolingual, female, and white, many MLs do not experience the benefit of teachers who understand and connect to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This book seeks to help bridge that gap by providing educators who may not share the linguistic, cultural, ethnic, or racial makeup of their students an opportunity to reflect on the importance of MLs' culture in teaching and learning. To do so, we guide teachers through recognizing their own culture and its impact on their teaching and interactions with MLs. We are aware that readers of this book will be at various stages in their work for more culturally responsive and equitable schools, and we have written the book with multiple audiences in mind. No matter where you are in your journey, we encourage you to be ready to listen, to take risks, and to sit with the discomfort that this work may bring. The work is ongoing, and there is always more that we can learn.

As two white educators, we know that we also still have much to learn about how to advocate for and improve education for students of color, multilingual learners, and other marginalized student populations that are not receiving equitable education in our nation's schools. In writing this book, we have sought out the perspectives of academics and educators of color to better understand the work that needs to be done yet are keenly aware that we may never fully understand. At the same time, we recognize the scholarship that people of color have contributed to the field all along and honor their work. We look forward to discussing the ideas in this book with other educators, and we know that we will learn much from these future discussions.

We began writing the book in a time in which anti-immigrant sentiment was no longer hidden from view and even became acceptable, embraced, and endorsed in some circles. As we were putting together the final chapters, the world as we knew it seemed to spin further out of control. The COVID-19 pandemic first struck in spring 2020, and the nation's school districts moved to a remote teaching model, in many cases overnight. During this time, we saw existing inequities become more exposed and impact education in ways they had not before. Factors such as families' access to technology and the internet now determined if students could take part in teaching that was suddenly happening online. Due to these inequities, many students were unaccounted for. School districts also faced challenges in effectively shifting to remote learning, resulting in a patchwork quilt of approaches to educating students with varying results. During the same time period, the United States experienced the largest protest movement that our country has witnessed in response to the brutal murder of George Floyd at the hands of a white Minneapolis police officer. The death of George Floyd in May 2020 marked a tipping point in a long list of police violence against Black Americans, including Breonna Taylor, Atatiana Jefferson, Trayvon Martin, Stephon Clark, Philando Castile, Tony McDade, and numerous others.

The inhumane federal anti-immigrant policies that have been enforced in recent years, the inequitable access to learning opportunities that were brought to the surface during distance

learning, and the protests against systemic racism in our country have led to renewed attention to issues of equity. More educators are joining in conversations about what it means to teach and advocate for social justice, anti-racism, and equity. We acknowledge the work that has been done on these issues for many years and are cautiously optimistic that the events that took place in spring 2020 are ripping off the Band-Aid and inviting even more voices into these conversations. It can be challenging to understand what these theoretical concepts look like in practice in schools and classrooms. Keeping in mind the work that has been done in the past, with this book we have attempted to make these abstract ideas even more concrete, actionable, and relevant to our current reality. However, we recognize that there may be some who say we haven't gone far enough. We agree this is only a first step as we add to the body of work, and this book does not contain all the answers. However, we are committed to learning more about how to better support MLs with your help. In order to start our work, we need to allow ourselves to be vulnerable and begin with humility.

As educators, we can no longer deny the responsibility that we have in engaging in equity and anti-racism work. At the same time, it can be valuable to recognize the joys that come with this challenging task. Your teaching will be enriched when you begin from a strengths- or assets-based perspective of MLs and create a space for the multifaceted experiences of language, culture, and life that they bring with them. As you develop your advocacy and allyship, you will notice your ability to spot inequities, and your strength to speak out against these inequities will grow. Last but certainly not least, your students will thrive when your local classrooms, schools, families, and communities collaborate to recognize MLs' academic and social-emotional learning strengths and meet their needs.

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Just as a classroom is made richer when there is ample opportunity for diverse voices to be shared, heard, and celebrated, the same is true for this book. We could not have written this book without the collaboration and support of many.

We would like to express our deep gratitude to Corwin Program Director and Publisher Dan Alpert, who first inspired us to add a chapter about the role of culture in teaching multilingual learners in our previous book and who has encouraged us at every step of this journey. We deeply appreciate his quiet, calming effect on our writing as well as on our lives, especially when our worlds turned upside down. We'd also like to thank Senior Content Development Editor Lucas Schleicher for his attention to detail during the filming of video through the publication of the book. We would like to say a heartfelt thank you to Director of Marketing Strategy Maura Sullivan for her wise guidance in the promotion of this publication and to our project editor Tori Mirsadjadi and copyeditor Amy Hanquist Harris for their support in guiding this project over the finish line. A big thank you also to Davis Lester for his keen eye throughout the filming and production of the videos that bring the strategies in this book to life. We would also like to thank Dave Bartlett and Kelley Hildmeyer for the support they provided during the filming.

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How to Approach This Book

HOW WE TOOK YOU INTO CONSIDERATION WHILE WRITING THIS BOOK

We have purposefully written this book so that different types of readers can see themselves reflected in it. We would like to be sure we offer multiple entry points for people in different roles. When we work with teachers through professional development, we always ask what their roles are to tailor our content and application activities to their specific content, grade level(s), and students. Similarly, we also offer different options for administrators, instructional coaches, and other educators not in the classroom to apply the content we're sharing to their contexts. For example, instead of asking administrators to create a lesson plan, we might have them collaborate with teachers to plan a mini–professional development on a given topic.

Reading this book could be a journey you're taking as an individual or with a professional learning community (PLC) as a book study in a school or in a district. Your journey could very well be at the university level. We've made sure to differentiate and/or include considerations for these settings so you can choose your own path. Table A details different types of readers who may be interacting with this book.

Table A Types of Readers Interacting With This Book

Type of Reader	Description	How the Book Is Tailored to You
Preservice educator	Student working toward certification in a teacher licensure program	We ensure that our application activities and reflective questions allow you entry points to our content without a current classroom of K–12 students.
Inservice teacher	Teacher in a K–12 setting (classroom teacher and specialists)	We provide you ample opportunities to ensure your learning is practical and involves your students through application activities and reflective questions.
Administrator	Assistant principal, principal, district or state administrator	We tailor our application activities to you so that you can share your learning with teachers and other administrators you collaborate with and support.
Other educators not in the classroom	School psychologists, guidance counselors, school librarians, instructional coaches, etc.	We make sure the application activities can be customized to your unique context and adapted for your setting.

HOW EACH CHAPTER IS STRUCTURED

We have structured the chapters in a way that invites you, the reader, to reflect, connect, and apply the content to your own context in a safe space yet challenges your thinking and brings you out of your comfort zone. We recognize that in our own learning, we don't make any gains until we're feeling slightly out of our element. We aim to create the same conditions in this book, recognizing your expertise yet stretching your learning.

We encourage you to write in each chapter of this book, use sticky notes to mark what is important to you, and make it relevant to you personally. Each of our first two chapters presents the urgency for each topic and shares a digestible amount of research, broken up by reflection questions and opportunities for application. Beginning in Chapter 2, each chapter opens

with a scenario about one of two MLs, either Manny or Lian. Following the scenarios, you will find some type of reflection activity to give you space to think about the scenario and connect it to your own context. Next, you'll find a chapter overview. Then, you'll read relevant research and background that illustrates and situates the importance of the chapter's theme and defines any key terms. You will also find look-fors that provide practical, observable actions (to see how the content looks in practice). We will then share specific activities or examples of resources to give you new ideas for your practice in enacting the chapter's culturally responsive principle. You'll find sketchnotes, tools, and notes about videos integrated throughout each chapter to bring it to life. After this section, we will share three steps that you can take to integrate this culturally responsive principle in your practice. The chapter then concludes with a bulleted summary, reflection questions for you to deepen your own thinking, and references.

OTHER UNIQUE RESOURCES IN THIS BOOK

Use #CRTforMLs to tag the book on Twitter.

We would like to highlight the additional resources that distinguish this book from others, bring this book to life, and also help ground it in reality. We often are asked what concepts, strategies, and tools "look like" in real life, and it can be challenging to describe. We prefer to *show* you how it can look, and we are able to do so through using authentic videos, student scenarios, sketchnotes, and practical tools.

- **Resource 1: Videos.** We were honored to partner with our longtime collaborator, Syracuse City School District in Syracuse, New York. Over the course of two days during the first snowstorm in November (!), we were fortunate to film classroom footage, interviews with educators, and an evening parent meet and greet. We weave in one or two video clips per chapter, which you will notice when you see a QR code, a URL, and a description. These video clips illustrate the concepts we are describing in each chapter to show you what they look like in action.
- **Resource 2: Student portraits.** We chose to create student portraits as ways to illustrate or apply content and also

to model what the strategies we describe might look like in an actual classroom setting with real students. To do this, we created the portrait of Manny, a third grader, and Lian, a ninth grader. You will notice that we alternate between the two students in each chapter, and you will uncover new discoveries about each one as you progress through the book. We have included the student scenarios to provide a portrait of the types of experiences that MLs may have in schools. These scenarios and student portraits are not meant to be representative of the experiences of all MLs.

- **Resource 3: Sketchnotes.** Sketchnote graphics serve as eye-catching visual supplements to help reinforce key concepts and spotlight central themes within a body of text. Incorporating a unique graphic style helps differentiate content, adds a secondary layer of personality and memorability, and introduces a visual that reinforces information in a format that is easy for readers to digest and relate to. Stylistically, this form of graphic brings an additional layer of personality to our content while shedding greater light on pressing issues. All sketchnotes are hand-drawn, scanned, and imported into Photoshop to arrange layouts, edit sketches, and finalize the graphic. We are fortunate to have an incredibly talented in-house graphic designer, Kate Monick, who draws from our content to design sketchnotes. Using sketchnotes has helped our content gain a great degree of online traction through social media and helps tell a story. Sketchnotes that are framed around specific strategies can also be a useful resource to share with colleagues in your collaboration to build a culturally responsive school climate.
- **Resource 4: Appendices.** Our book contains six appendices, which are made up of several practical, printable tools to allow you to dig a little deeper on the topics we describe. We encourage you to print out these tools and use them as a catalyst to your own conversations around MLs' equity. In addition, our final appendix is a comprehensive list of supporting resources. While we cite all the references in each of our chapters, the final appendix provides additional materials, curated by topic, that you may wish to refer to on your journey to culturally responsive teaching MLs. Some topics include anti-racism and anti-bias resources, recommended booklists for K–12 students, and additional resources on social justice.

Chapter Overview

CHAPTER 1: WHY CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING MATTERS

This chapter frames the content that you will encounter in the rest of the book. We define who we mean by multilingual learners, comparing them to other groups of students. We then examine the concepts of race, ethnicity, and culture as facets of MLs' identities. Next, we ask you to reflect on the relationship between culture and equity for MLs. In the subsequent part of the chapter, we share concepts of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) from three leading educators. The following portion of our chapter is devoted to framing our five guiding principles for CRT of MLs and presenting suggestions for a culturally responsive teaching cycle.

CHAPTER 2: BUILDING CULTURAL COMPETENCY

In Chapter 2, we discuss what it means to build cultural competency in today's context, weave in relevant research, and provide five elements of cultural competency, ranging from understanding your own culture to looking at the role of culture at an institutional level. You can then reflect on your own cultural beliefs and expectations and also explore potential personal bias that you might bring to your interactions with MLs. We conclude this chapter—and the next several chapters that follow—with three practical steps that you can use to continue your exploration of this topic at an individual and/or school level.

CHAPTER 3: OPERATING FROM AN ASSETS-BASED APPROACH

This chapter is framed around the following guiding principle "Culturally responsive teaching is assets-based." This chapter

examines what an assets-based approach is for MLs and provides multiple strategies to help shift yourself and others to operate from a place of MLs' strengths. The chapter shares relevant research and contains many practical tools as well as three concrete steps in order to respond to and mitigate deficit-thinking related to multilingual students in your schools and districts. Case studies and reflection questions found in this chapter also guide your work in this area.

CHAPTER 4: SIMULTANEOUSLY SUPPORTING AND CHALLENGING STUDENTS

Chapter 4 is framed around the following guiding principle: "Culturally responsive teaching simultaneously challenges and supports students." In this chapter, we ask you to examine equitable education opportunities for MLs in your context and reflect on how you can support all learners on their academic journeys. We focus on three key areas supported by research: (1) MLs' access to content and programs, (2) ways to support MLs as they acquire language and content, and (3) how to challenge MLs to think critically and build cross-curricular connections. The chapter contains a wealth of strategies supporting MLs through scaffolded instruction, as well as using interdisciplinary, project-based learning and social justice units.

CHAPTER 5: PLACING STUDENTS AT THE CENTER OF THE LEARNING

This chapter is framed around the following guiding principle: "Culturally responsive teaching places students at the center of learning." We begin by defining what it means to put students at the center of learning and share research that supports student-centered pedagogy. You will benefit from specific strategies for learning about your students and their

learning preferences and setting a collaborative tone in your classroom. Next, we explore strategies for engaging ML students and families in goal setting and involving MLs in taking part in self- and peer assessment. We also share strategies for fostering engaging, peer-to-peer interactions and ways to honor ML growth and achievement.

CHAPTER 6: LEVERAGING STUDENTS' LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

Chapter 6 is framed around the following guiding principle: "Culturally responsive teaching leverages students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds." In this chapter, we share relevant research and the urgency around why leveraging MLs' linguistic and cultural backgrounds is essential to culturally responsive teaching and what it means to do so. We then take an in-depth look at strategies for leveraging MLs' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, tools for incorporating multicultural resources into the curriculum, and strategies for incorporating translanguaging and home language practices into your teaching.

CHAPTER 7: UNITING STUDENTS' SCHOOLS, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITIES

This chapter is framed around our final guiding principle: "Culturally responsive teaching unites students' schools, families, and communities." In this chapter, we expand our lens to focus on the critical job of building partnerships with families and communities in support of MLs. We begin by exploring research on what family engagement is and why it is important for our work with MLs. Next, we share five strategies related to fostering ML family engagement and collaborating with ML communities. These five strategies are as follows: (1) create a welcoming environment for ML families, (2) build relationships with ML families, (3) communicate effectively with ML families, (4) overcome barriers to ML family engagement, and

(5) empower ML families. As with our other chapters, we provide examples and tools to support three practical steps you can take to unite MLs' schools, families, and communities.

CHAPTER 8: PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

In our final chapter, we share examples of practical ML advocacy tools and strategies that you can use as you work to implement the five principles in your context. We begin by introducing the National Education Association's (NEA) five-step framework for EL advocacy and reflect on how it can be applied to strengthening culturally responsive teaching for MLs and their families. We weave a specific case study throughout the chapter as a way to exemplify the ML advocacy steps. We then share several examples of innovative programs that are being used in various school districts that help to foster a districtwide climate that is supportive of MLs. We conclude the chapter by sharing some final thoughts on the urgent need for CRT work and highlighting key themes that are found throughout this book.

CHAPTER ONE

Why Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

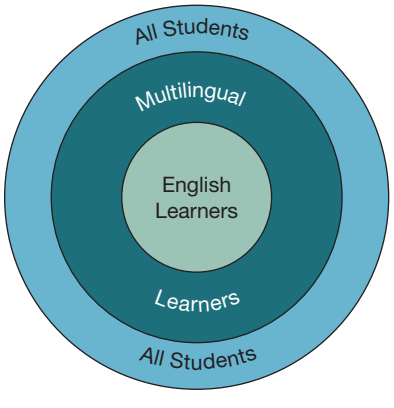
This chapter will frame the content that you will encounter in the rest of the book. We'll begin by defining who we mean by multilingual learners (MLs) and comparing them to English learners (ELs). We'll then take a look at what race and ethnicity are and how they may form one piece of multilingual learners' identities. Next, we'll ask you to reflect on what culture is, and then, we'll ask you to think about the relationship between culture and equity for MLs. After that, we'll share concepts of culturally responsive teaching (CRT) from three leading educators. The next component of the chapter will share the sense of urgency around CRT, focusing on three key reasons this topic is absolutely essential at this particular moment in time. Next, we'll share our five guiding principles for CRT of MLs and will end our chapter with suggestions for a culturally responsive teaching cycle. Before we get started with this chapter, we'd like you to know that this chapter will contain the most theory that you will encounter in the book.

We attempt to present it in a way that's engaging and allows you to reflect on what you're learning as you go.

DEFINING MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

There are many different, often confusing, terms being used today for students who speak a language in addition to English (Sugarman, 2020). English learners (ELs) and emergent bilinguals are different names for the same students whose parent or guardian reports speaking one or more languages other than English in the home. These students are eligible for language support services. While EL is used by the federal government and most states to describe students who are exposed to a language in addition to English, some argue that the term "English learner" focuses more on students' deficits of learning a language while ignoring the strength of their home language (García, 2009b; Zacarian & Staehr Fenner, 2020). While we agree that we should always focus on students' assets (e.g., Zacarian & Staehr Fenner, 2020), we feel we still have a great deal of work to do in terms of agreeing on a name to call the students we strive to serve.

Although our previous work is in support of ELs (e.g., Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017), for this book we chose to widen our scope and focus on the larger group of students called multilingual learners. Educators sometimes use the terms "English learner" and "multilingual learner" interchangeably, but it is our understanding that ELs and MLs share some, but not all, characteristics. **We define multilingual learners as students whose parent or guardian reports speaking one or more languages other than English at home.** MLs may or may not qualify for English language support, depending on their level of English proficiency.



According to the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WIDA, 2019), the term "multilingual learners" refers to "all children and youth who are, or have been, consistently exposed to multiple languages. It includes students known as English language learners (ELLs) or dual language

learners (DLLs); heritage language learners; and students who speak varieties of English or indigenous languages" (p. 1). Let's unpack some of these terms a bit more.

- The term **"dual language learner" is used in early childhood education to refer to children from homes where a language other than English is spoken.** However, these children, ranging from birth to prekindergarten, are too young to be formally designated as EL using the Department of Education's official definition. The term "dual language learner" is useful in that it highlights how young children are learning their home language from a more developmental perspective and are also learning English if they are being instructed in that language.
- **Heritage language learners are students who are studying a language that they have cultural proficiency in or a cultural connection to.** For example, this term would apply to a Mexican American student taking a Spanish heritage language class or Spanish for native speakers class.
- **Students who speak varieties of English include Caribbean English speakers, speakers of African American language, and speakers of Hawaiian American language, among others.** These students speak a "variety of English that is different in structure and form than academic English" (Los Angeles Unified School District, 2018, p. 22).
- **Students who speak indigenous languages speak a language native to a region.** For example, Quechua is an indigenous language spoken in Peru, and Aleut is an indigenous language spoken in Alaska.

The takeaway is that MLs aren't coming to school with the same shared knowledge. Intake forms used when students enroll in a school or district may not catch these differences either. For example, it may not be apparent that a student enrolling from Mexico speaks an indigenous language instead of Spanish as his or her home language.

Table 1.1 takes a deeper look at different students who speak a language in addition to English, sharing characteristics of their home language and eligibility for language support services.

Table 1.1 Definitions of Different Types of Language Learners

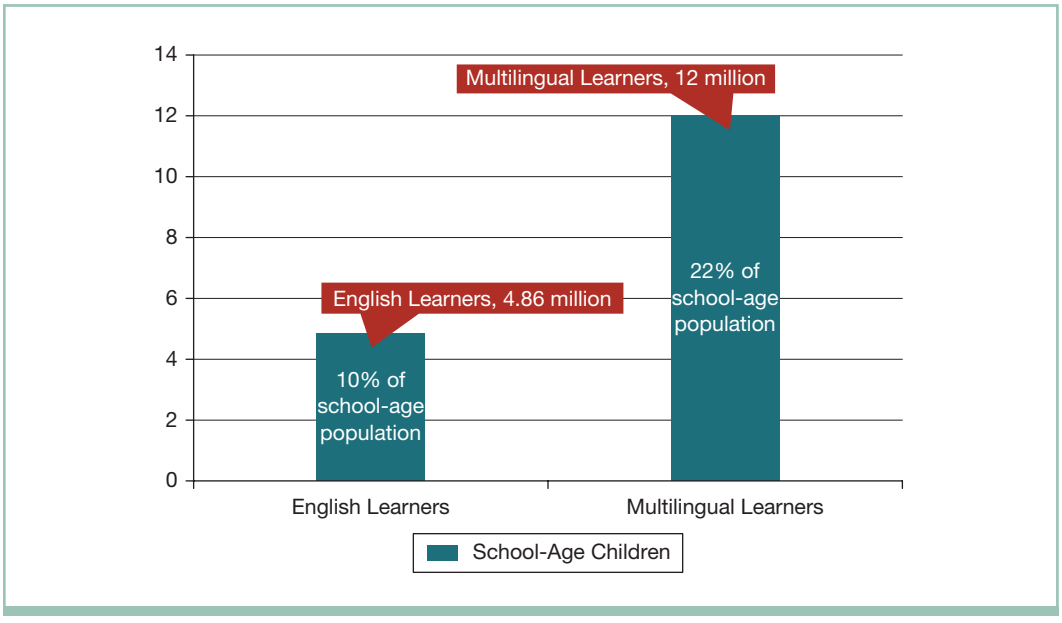
Name of Learner	Home Language	Eligibility for English Language Services
Dual language learner	Student (birth to prekindergarten) whose parent or guardian reports speaking one or more languages other than English at home; student is acquiring home language proficiency while simultaneously learning English	May or may not qualify for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) services
English learner or emergent bilingual	Student whose parent or guardian reports speaking one or more languages other than English at home	Qualifies for ESOL services
Former EL	Student whose parent or guardian reports speaking one or more languages other than English at home	Qualified for and may have received ESOL services in the past and has since tested out of the need for services
Ever EL	Current ELs and Former ELs as a group	Qualified for and may or may not have received or be receiving ESOL services
Heritage language learner	Student who is studying a language that he or she has cultural proficiency in or a cultural connection to	May or may not have received or be receiving ESOL services
Multilingual learner	Student whose parent or guardian reports speaking one or more languages other than English at home	May or may not qualify for ESOL services
Never EL	Student who reports speaking one or more languages other than English at home	Did not qualify for ESOL services due to linguistic proficiency in English

Source: Adapted from Kieffer and Thompson, 2018.

We believe that all educators should have a sense of the national context (i.e., the big picture) and how it impacts their work in schools and districts. In the United States in 2016–2017, school-age ELs numbered approximately 4.86 million, making up nearly 10 percent of the school-age population (NCES, 2017; see Figure 1.1). Due to their level of English proficiency, ELs are eligible for language support services, such as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL). In contrast, MLs, as a group, encompass markedly more students than ELs,

with close to 12 million or 22 percent of children ages 5 to 17 speaking a language other than English at home, according to U.S. census figures in 2017 (U.S. Census, 2017). Multilingual learners may or may not qualify for ESOL services.

Figure 1.1 Population of EL and ML School-Age Children in the United States



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Common Core of Data (CCD), "Local Education Agency Universe Survey," 2000–01 through 2016–17. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_204.20.asp?current=yes

We recognize that states and districts may have different terms for language support programs, such as English language development (ELD), English as a second language (ESL), structured English immersion (SEI), and so on. For the purposes of simplicity, we will refer to the general term "English for speakers of other languages" (ESOL) from this point forward. We also wish to note that the ideal scenario for all students—both ML and non-ML—and one that is mandated in some locations is dual language instruction. In dual language settings, the student makeup is approximately half native English speakers and half target language speakers (e.g., Spanish, Korean, Arabic). Students receive content-rich instruction in both languages as they acquire proficiency in the two languages and also learn about both cultures.

THE INTERSECTION BETWEEN RACE AND ETHNICITY AND MLs

Now that we have defined who MLs are in the context of K–12 students, we also need to have a sense of what race and ethnicity are, as these constructs may have an impact on many aspects of MLs' lives, including the privilege they are granted (or not) and the ways in which their teachers may (or may not) connect with them. When we were in our teacher educator programs, we weren't provided any guidance beyond the imperative to "know our students' language and culture." We didn't have any potentially uncomfortable conversations about other facets of MLs' identities, including race and ethnicity. While we recognize the information we're sharing here is limited, we encourage you to learn more about the intersectionality between MLs' languages, cultures, races, ethnicities, and privilege in order to better prepare yourselves for CRT. We acknowledge that we cannot possibly do these topics much justice here, but we urge you to do more research to have a more informed sense of MLs' identities beyond their languages and cultures.

One definition of race is "a grouping of humans based on shared physical or social qualities into categories generally viewed as distinct by society" (Barnshaw, 2008, p. 1091). In the book *White Fragility*, DiAngelo (2018) tells us that, like gender, race is also a social construct with there being no true biological race. External, superficial characteristics that are commonly used to define race (e.g., hair texture, skin color) are actually not reliable indicators of genetic variation between people (Cooper et al., 2003). However, many tend to believe racial differences are biologic. Instead, DiAngelo (2018) imparts us to understand that society was organized along racial lines. She shares that the idea of racial inferiority in the United States was created as the US was being formed to justify unequal treatment of enslaved African people, Native Americans, and Mexicans, among other people.

Merriam-Webster **(n.d.) defines ethnicity as "a particular ethnic affiliation or group" and ethnic as "of or relating to large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background."** In addition, Nagel (1994) states that ethnicity is made up of the two building blocks of identity and culture and is dynamic and constantly evolving. According to the U. S. Census Bureau, ethnicity has a limited definition, used to determine "whether a person is of Hispanic origin or not" (2017, p. 1), but DiAngelo (2018) notes some wider examples of ethnic groups, such as the Irish, Italians, and Polish European ethnic groups.

It's important for educators to have a sense of what race and ethnicity are due to our potential for subconscious racial biases as teachers of MLs.[1] While some MLs and their educators may share a common racial or ethnic identity, many do not. As white educators ourselves who have been granted many unearned privileges, we (the book authors) must become aware of and reflect on what these biases and privileges might mean for our practice as teachers. No matter what our racial identity and ethnicity, all of us need to approach this work with humility. We should place the focus on increasing equity for our students, not on making ourselves feel better, and part of this work is to identify how our culture and biases as educators influence who we are and how we interact with students. It takes educators collaborating, checking their biases, and speaking out against inequities to begin to truly support MLs.

ASPECTS OF CULTURE

Now that we have shed some light on who MLs are, let's turn our focus to examining culture. Let's begin by reflecting on the word "culture." How do you define culture?

[1]We will discuss this topic more in Chapter 2.

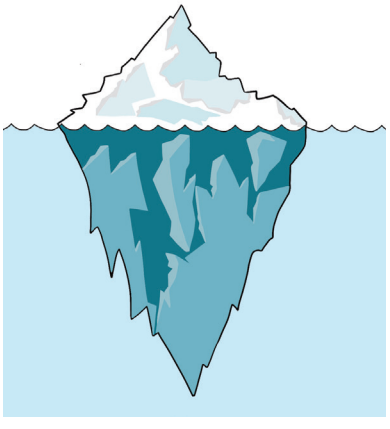
Application Activity 1a. Defining Culture

Here are three aspects of culture. Choose the one that resonates the most with you. Why does it stand out to you?

1. Culture includes customs, values, norms, and ideas that are learned through socialization and participation in families and communities, including schools; there is great variability in terms of how the culture is manifested (Erickson, 2007).

2. Culture is "a way of life, especially as it relates to the socially transmitted habits, customs, traditions, and beliefs that characterize a particular group of people at a particular time. It includes the behaviors, actions, practices, attitudes, norms, values, communication styles, language, etiquette, spirituality, concepts of health and healing, beliefs, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social group. Culture is the lens through which we look at the word. It is the context within which we operate and make sense of the world. Culture influences how we process learning, solve problems, and teach" (Saifer et al., 2011, p. 9).

3. An analogy is often made between three levels of culture—surface, shallow, and deep—and an iceberg (Hall, 1976). The elements of culture that are visible (at the surface level), such as food, clothing, and language, are understood to carry a low emotional load. This surface-level culture means that people expect such differences, and these differences are less likely to cause conflict or misunderstandings between people or groups of people. However, the invisible elements of culture (the greater and more meaningful aspects of culture) that include both shallow and deep culture are much more likely to carry an emotional weight. Shallow culture, which consists of the beliefs we hold, include such aspects as our attitudes about concepts of time and nonverbal communication. Deep culture, which is made up of our values and thought patterns, includes aspects of cultures such as ideas about fairness and justice or expectations related to gender roles (Hall, 1976; Hammond, 2015).



And since many of us like to also represent concepts visually, look at these four images of culture. Which image best represents culture to you? Why?

1.

Photo by Mostafa Meraji on Unsplash: https://unsplash.com/photos/cHxgOlyHGvA

2.

Photo by Charles Postiaux on Unsplash: https://unsplash.com/photos/efkSRelxQAw

3.

Photo by Husniati Salma on Unsplash: https://unsplash.com/photos/ldkHWg5s3Ec

4.

Photo by Jimmy Salazar on Unsplash: https://unsplash.com/photos/_JYtfcL_jog

Reflection Questions

Why did you choose the aspect and/or image of culture that you did? Or like a lot of educators we collaborate with, did you choose a little bit of each definition and/or image to represent your own concept of culture? If so, why?

No matter how you define culture, it is important to remember that everyone is a member of various cultural groups and that even within cultural groups there can be great variability in terms of beliefs, expectations, and behaviors. For this reason, it is important that we don't put students on the spot

and ask them to speak for an entire cultural group. Instead, we can ask them to share their experiences as a member of one or more cultural groups in a way that puts them at ease (e.g., with a partner, in a small group, in writing)—but only if they feel comfortable doing so.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND EQUITY

Now that we have explored some concepts of culture, we'd like to dispel some misconceptions about culture and ask you to think about how you conceptualize the relationship between culture and equity. **When we think of culture, we run the risk of only scratching the surface level of culture (e.g., food and fiestas) and avoiding challenging conversations about equity for MLs**. Social justice educator Paul Gorski (2016) shares that culture is important as one piece of students' multilayered identities, noting that cultural sensitivity is an important facet when working toward educational equity as long as we recognize and embrace students' whole selves instead of assigning them to "cultural groups" based on one dimension of their identities. He states, "No amount of cultural knowledge can prepare me sufficiently to recognize and respond justly to the insidious and often implicit and intersectional inequities experienced by many students" (p. 224). Further, focusing on culture alone may serve as a euphemism for such deep equity concerns as race or socioeconomic status, putting privileged educators in a more comfortable position and diminishing their potential discomfort when addressing complex issues (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Park, 2005).

Although it may seem fun and informative, celebrating cultural diversity does not get to the hard work of educators advocating, serving as allies, and relentlessly striving for equity for MLs. We want to be sure our work with culturally responsive teaching does not get stuck in the safe space of celebrating cultural diversity but instead works toward ensuring MLs' equitable education, even if—especially if—that means breaking out of our comfort zones. Gorski (2016) argues educators' focus should shift from culture to equity, as the concept of culture itself remains contested by many,

to the point that "nobody seems to know with any precision what it means" (p. 223). Educators are urged to ensure we distinguish between cultural initiatives and equity initiatives, beginning by dismantling a "culture fetish" that is reflected in initiatives such as cultural competence, cultural proficiency, multicultural education, and intercultural communication, which may minimize or entirely wipe out a focus on equity for marginalized students (Gorski & Swalwell, 2015). We agree that we will never make progress in terms of dismantling inequity for MLs until we enter into difficult, potentially emotionally charged conversations and take actions that go beyond the surface levels of our students' cultures. Our goal of CRT is to achieve equity for MLs. While this book does not hold the answers, it provides some entry points that dig in deeper beyond the fun, comfortable aspects of culture in order for educators to do the hard work toward the goal of equity and justice for MLs.

DEFINING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING

While there has been a growing body of research on the concept of culturally responsive teaching,[2] we will share a brief synthesis of three prominent educators who have contributed significantly to this field—Gloria Ladson-Billings, Geneva Gay, and Zaretta Hammond—while recognizing there are many others who are shaping CRT (e.g., Django Paris, Sonia Nieto, and Paul Gorski, among others). We expand on other theories of CRT in subsequent chapters of this book and also include an appendix with additional resources we don't directly cite in this book.

Gloria Ladson-Billings

Ladson-Billings coined the term "culturally relevant pedagogy" to describe what she calls a pedagogy of opposition (1992). **She explains that CRT empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically, and she emphasizes the importance of including**

[2]Culturally relevant teaching is also known as culturally responsive teaching.

students' cultural references throughout all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). In her theory of culturally relevant teaching, Ladson-Billings (1995) outlines two key theoretical underpinnings that are critical to the development of culturally relevant pedagogy:

1. Sociocultural consciousness, which she generally refers to as conceptions of self and others
2. Caring for students, which expands beyond caring about students' academic well-being to a holistic focus on their overall needs, coupled with having high expectations of them

Ladson-Billings details her three central tenets of this type of constructivist equity pedagogy in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Central Tenets of CRT

Ladson-Billings' Central Tenet	Definition of What CRT Does Through This Tenet
1. High expectations	Emphasizes academic success for all students
2. Cultural competence	Assists students in the formation of a positive cultural identity
3. Critical consciousness	Guides students in developing a critical consciousness they can use to critique or interrupt current and historical social inequities

Source: Adapted from Ladson-Billings, 1995.

To Ladson-Billings, CRT goes beyond individual student empowerment, extending to collective empowerment. The goal is not to have students relinquish their culture to take on the dominant culture's norms but rather develop students' sense of a synergistic relationship between their home and community culture and the school culture. In addition, teachers must guide students in recognizing and addressing social inequities (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Within CRT, students achieve academic success, develop or maintain cultural competence, and develop a critical consciousness.

Reflection Question

What takeaways do you have about Gloria Ladson-Billings's scholarship on culturally relevant pedagogy?

Geneva Gay

Geneva Gay (2010) defines culturally responsive teaching as **"using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for [students]"** (p. 31). Similarly, teachers who use a culturally responsive method in their teaching view culture as an asset, which can be used effectively to enhance academic and social achievement. The concept of culture as a student asset looks closely at what all students bring to their learning as opposed to what we might erroneously presume they don't. Gay (2002) contends that preparing for culturally responsive teaching requires understanding the cultural characteristics and contributions of different ethnic groups in order to make schooling more "interesting and stimulating for, representative of, and responsive to (MLs)" (p. 107). It also requires being able to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of curricula and instructional materials and make the changes necessary to improve their overall quality as needed.

According to Gay (2013), culturally responsive teaching is embodied in four practical actions. Culturally responsive teachers should focus on the following facets:

1. Restructuring attitudes and beliefs: replacing deficit perspectives with assets-based perspectives
2. Resisting resistance: understanding where resistance to CRT comes from and addressing opposition to ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity

3. Centering culture and difference: understanding how and why culture and difference are essential ideologies and foundations of CRT
4. Establishing pedagogical connections: shaping instructional practices by the sociocultural characteristics of students' and teachers' contexts

Reflection Question

What stands out for you from Geneva Gay's work on CRT?

Zaretta Hammond

Hammond defines CRT in the following way:

> **[CRT is] an educator's ability to recognize students' cultural displays of learning and meaning making and to respond positively and constructively with teaching moves that use cultural knowledge as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing. All the while, the educator understands the importance of being in relationship and having a social–emotional connection to the student in order to create a safe space for learning. (2015, p. 15)**

To embody CRT, educators must develop sociopolitical consciousness, understanding the racialized society in which we live that grants unearned privilege to some while others, including MLs, experience disadvantage due to their race, gender, class, or language.

Hammond (2015) describes the importance of culturally responsive teaching and what we know about the brain and learning, emphasizing the way in which the brain seeks to

minimize social threats and maximize opportunities to connect. As educators, we may be unaware of language and behaviors that students might perceive as threats. We need to consciously work to make sure that all students feel included and valued. Such positive relationships will help keep our safety/threat detection system in check and allow for higher-order learning to take place. Some students may come from cultures with strong oral traditions, and teachers' use of stories, art, music, and movement will support learning. Hammond stresses that new information must be coupled with students' existing funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). Students' background knowledge is especially crucial for MLs (Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017) and is an important facet of CRT. When all these conditions are in place, the brain will physically grow through challenge and stretch. Table 1.3 summarizes key information about CRT from Ladson-Billings, Gay, and Hammond.

Reflection Question

What resonates with you from Zaretta Hammond's definition of CRT?

Table 1.3 Comparison of Ladson-Billings, Gay, and Hammond's Views of CRT

Educator	CRT Goals	Teachers' Actions
Ladson-Billings	• Empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically. • Develop sociocultural consciousness and caring for students. • Foster students' sense of cultural competence and the relationship between home/community and school culture.	• Encourage academic success and cultural competence. • Help students to recognize, understand, and critique current social inequities.

(Continued)

Table 1.3 (Continued)

Educator	CRT Goals	Teachers' Actions
Gay	• Use the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective. • Look closely at what all students bring to their learning. • View culture as an asset, which can be used effectively to enhance academic and social achievement.	• Restructure attitudes and beliefs. • Understand resistance to CRT. • Center culture and difference. • Establish pedagogical connections.
Hammond	• Focus on the impact of CRT on the brain and learning; the brain seeks to minimize social threats and maximize opportunities to connect. • Couple all new information with existing funds of knowledge in order to be learned. • Ensure that cultural knowledge serves as a scaffold to connect what the student knows to new concepts and content in order to promote effective information processing.	• Use stories, music, and repetition to connect to students and build intellective capacity. • Consciously work to make sure that all students feel included and valued. • Develop a sociopolitical consciousness. • Create student–teacher relationships and social-emotional connections to students.

To learn how some Syracuse City School District (SCSD) educators define CRT and its importance to MLs, take a look at the video clip *Why Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters*.

Video 1.1

Why Culturally Responsive Teaching Matters

To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

resources.corwin.com/CulturallyResponsiveTeaching

Reflection Question

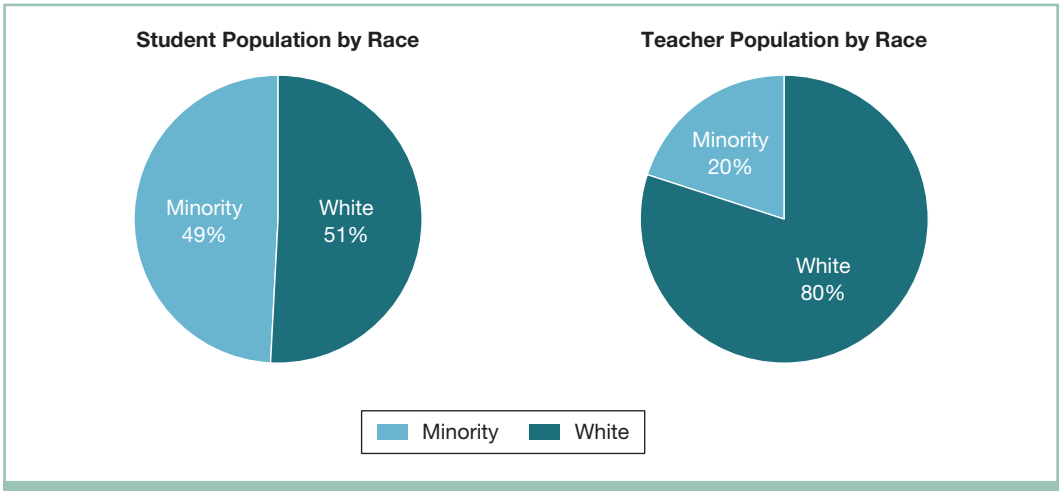
What would you like to learn about CRT for MLs?

WHY CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING IS CRITICAL FOR EQUITABLY EDUCATING MLs

Now that we have explored various definitions of culture and CRT, let's begin examining why culturally responsive instruction is a critical component of multilingual learners' education. Although we could look at many more reasons, we will touch upon three here: the mismatch between MLs, teachers, and families; microaggressions and the increased bullying of MLs; and the revised TESOL Pre-K–12 Professional Teaching Standards.

Mismatches Between MLs, Teachers, and Families

Figure 1.2 Student and Teacher Populations by Race



Source: Adapted from Ingersoll, R. M., Merrill, E., Stuckey, D., & Collins, G. (2018). *Seven trends: The transformation of the teaching force*. CPRE Research Reports.

One type of mismatch that exists is between teachers' and students' race and ethnicity (see Figure 1.2). Ingersoll et al. (2018), in their analysis of trends in the teacher workforce, explain that while the number of teachers of color is on the rise, there is still a significant gap between the percentage of teachers of color and the percentage of students of color nationally in the United States. Educators remain a primarily white, non-Hispanic workforce. White students make up 51 percent of the school-aged population while minority students make up 49 percent. However, 80 percent of teachers are white while 20 percent are minority. **This misalignment is significant because it means that many students of color in the nation's schools lack adult role models and contact with teachers who may more easily "get it"—those who understand their MLs' ethnic, racial, linguistic, and/or cultural backgrounds.** We should note that most parents or guardians of MLs help their children develop positive self-esteem and feel proud of their assets, including their language and culture. However, Hammond (2015) notes it is when they come to school that many MLs begin to experience the feelings of being marginalized, unseen, and silenced. These types of mismatches, which include educators' low expectations for students, can manifest themselves in MLs falling to a state of learned helplessness, in which students believe they have no control over their ability to improve as a learner. Because they then believe they don't have the capacity, they may learn not to exert any effort when faced with challenging work.

When students and teachers represent different cultures and backgrounds, it can result in a home–school mismatch on a more systemic level. The home–school mismatch is present when students have learning styles, discourse behaviors, or values of education that are different from their teachers, which can be detrimental to student learning and negatively impact the relationship between student and teacher (Delpit, 2006; Heath, 1983; Ogbu, 2003). When MLs' home cultures and the culture of school have different expectations, norms, or values, there can be a mismatch that may impact students' engagement as well as how they see themselves as learners (Cummins, 1986). Educators must have the deep understanding and skills to recognize and honor the home cultures of their students while teaching students the nuances of school culture (Calderón et al., 2011; Delpit, 1995; Saifer et al., 2011).

Microaggressions and School Bullying of MLs

One especially worrisome, growing trend we've been keenly aware of is the increasing number of microaggressions and school bullying instances that have been reported for MLs in recent years. This bullying has taken place from student–student and, even more sadly, teacher–student. Social media and mainstream media have also served to proliferate the ease with which MLs can be bullied. The concept of bullying includes the more covert behavior of microaggressions, which serves to maintain an imbalanced power structure (Rivera, 2011). **Microaggressions are the brief verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities—whether intentional or unintentional—that communicate slights, snubs, or insults to people based solely to any group, but to culturally marginalized groups in particular** (Sue, 2010). While microaggressions may appear harmless to observers, they can be detrimental to those groups who endure them. Some examples of microaggressions include assuming people of color are from a different country (e.g., "So where are you *really* from?") or insisting that a person of color does not face any discrimination (Sue et al., 2007).

While microaggressions are a more covert form of bullying, more obvious bullying itself is also on the rise among school-aged children. An online survey of more than 10,000 kindergarten through 12th-grade educators by the Southern Poverty Law Center (2016) found that more than 2,500 students described specific incidents of bigotry and harassment, with the overwhelming majority of these incidents not making the news. Eight in 10 educators who responded reported heightened anxiety for marginalized students, including MLs, Muslims, and African American students. In addition, many educators reported white students telling students of color they would be deported, with nearly 1,000 educators sharing family separation or deportation as one of ML students' concerns. Some of the instances of bullying that were reported in *The Washington Post* (2020) include the following:

- A physical education teacher told a student that he would be deported.

- A substitute teacher promised a Lebanese American student, "You're getting kicked out of my country."
- A school employee flashed a coin bearing the word "ICE" at a Latino student.

Some schools have stepped up to be proactive in terms of addressing the bullying of MLs. For example, in California's Riverside Polytechnic High School, educators have expanded a student club focused on improving the school's culture and climate so that all students feel more welcomed. The school, which is 60 percent Latino, also offers three courses—African American, Chicano, and ethnic studies—that are designed to help students better understand one another. Another high school in Maryland has created an approach to mitigate bullying against MLs and other minority students in the diverse school. Educators there created a global community citizenship class in 2017, and the course eventually became mandatory for all freshmen in the district. Through the course, students first use self-exploration to understand how their culture has shaped their views, behaviors, and goals. Later, they explore traditions of people in their local and global communities, with the goals of "fostering values of acceptance and inclusion of all people" (Anne Arundel County Public Schools, n.d.).

The TESOL Standards and CRT

Many K–12 classroom teachers may not be familiar with the TESOL Pre-K–12 Professional Teaching Standards. These standards are used across the United States and also worldwide to provide the framework for national recognition by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Programs (CAEP) for hundreds of ESOL teacher licensure programs. The TESOL standards were revised in 2019 and include a nuanced view of what the field feels is required for teachers to know about ML assets and culture. Beyond these standards' use for initial ESOL teacher licensure at the university level, it is suggested they be used as a rich resource to guide inservice teacher training for all teachers (Staehr Fenner & Kuhlman, 2012).

In terms of culturally responsive teaching and MLs, the TESOL standards (TESOL International Association, 2019) specify this:

> (Teachers) demonstrate and apply knowledge of the impact of dynamic academic, personal, familial, cultural, social, and sociopolitical contexts on the education and language acquisition of ELLs[4] as supported by research and theories. (Teachers) investigate the academic and personal characteristics of each ELL, as well as family circumstances and literacy practices, to develop individualized, effective instructional and assessment practices for their ELLs. (Teachers) recognize how educator identity, role, culture, and biases impact the interpretation of ELLs' strengths and needs. (p. 8)

The K–12 educational landscape has shifted in a way that we have moved past compartmentalized job descriptions that lead to working in silos (Zacarian & Staehr Fenner, 2020). We are *all* teachers of MLs and must collaborate for their academic success and personal well-being. In addition, administrators must be committed to all students' success (Staehr Fenner, 2014; Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017).

Reflection Question

Do you think that there is an urgent need for implementation of CRT with MLs? Please explain your response.

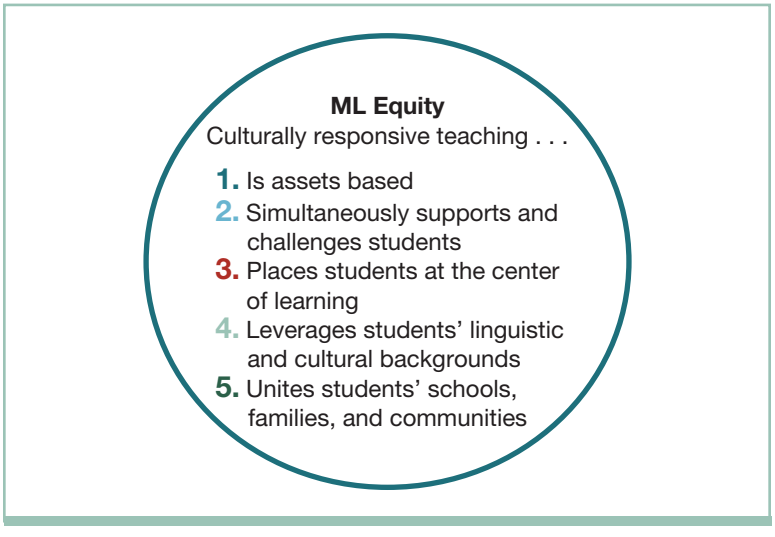
OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING OF MLs

Given all the reasons why CRT for MLs is especially urgent, we present five guiding principles that frame our approach to supporting MLs in culturally responsive ways. These principles synthesize our beliefs about educating MLs and are grounded in research and practice. We created the first four guiding principles in one chapter of our book *Unlocking English Learners'*

[4]Please note the TESOL standards use the term English language learner (ELL).

Potential (Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017). Our thinking is constantly evolving, and for this book, we are revising some of the first four guiding principles and are adding a fifth. It is also critical to note that these principles are situated within a context of increasing ML equity and do not occur in a vacuum (see Figure 1.3). We will dive into each of these topics in much more depth in Chapter 3 through Chapter 7.

Figure 1.3 Principles of ML Equity



Guiding Principle I: *Culturally responsive teaching is assets-based.*

There are multiple media outlets that espouse ways in which some believe multilingual learners are draining resources from our schools and economy. While it may sometimes pain us to hear such language about MLs, we feel it's important to be aware of how students may be perceived by others. In addition, in our professional development and technical assistance work with educators we sometimes hear comments unknowingly framed in deficit views about MLs. While we believe most educators don't intentionally think of MLs in terms of their deficits, deficit-based language sometimes subconsciously may surface. When we consider the obstacles that MLs must surmount in order to learn academic content in a context that may not be culturally relevant, it can be easy to default to a deficit-based approach. **A deficit perspective is**

one in which we focus on students' challenges and frame our interactions with them in terms of these challenges. Using a deficit lens, educators tend to view MLs' home language(s) and culture(s) as hindrances to overcome or, even worse, broken components that need to be fixed instead of shifting the school culture in a more systematic way (Hammond, 2015; National Education Association [NEA], 2015). Educators may attribute what they consider poor performance to MLs' linguistic abilities in English, low motivation, lack of parental or guardian involvement, or similar factors that place blame on students and/or their families (González, 2005; Valencia, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999).

In contrast, an assets-based perspective values students' home languages and cultures and sees them as a springboard for future learning (González, 2005; Valencia, 1997; Valenzuela, 1999; Zacarian & Staehr Fenner, 2020). To that end, an assets-based perspective recognizes that parents of MLs are involved in their children's education and support their children in ways that might not be so obvious to many educators who do not have knowledge of individual ML family routines and beliefs (Staehr Fenner, 2014). An additional benefit of educators adopting an assets-based perspective is that it provides multiple entry points and opportunities to honor students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and build teaching upon what students already know (Hammond, 2015).

Guiding Principle 2: *Culturally responsive teaching simultaneously supports and challenges students.*

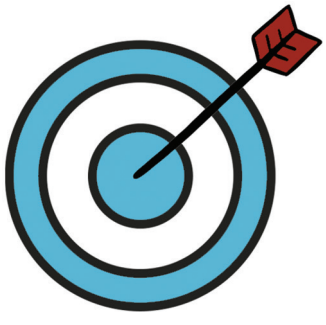
Our second principle is based on the importance of having high expectations for the MLs in your classes while at the same time giving them the support that they need to achieve. MLs should have access to the same grade-level content and texts as their non-ML peers, but they should feel safe and also be given sufficient instructional support for this work as needed. Hammond (2015) refers to this combination of creating a safe space for students while setting high expectations for them

and holding them accountable to meet those expectations as taking a "warm demander" stance. When teachers operate from a warm demander framework, students are less likely to become dependent on others for their learning. Hammond notes, "Your role as an ally in the learning partnership calls for you to know when to offer emotional comfort and care and when to not allow the student to slip into learned helplessness" (p. 97).

This second principle is also framed around the idea that within our society certain groups are bestowed privileges that are not granted to individuals outside these groups. As part of our second principle, culturally responsive teachers collaboratively develop lessons that include the history and experiences of diverse groups and explicit instruction about structures that reinforce power, privilege, and discriminatory practices in society. In addition, culturally responsive teachers provide opportunities for students, families, and educators to think critically about institutionalized inequity, how inequity and injustice impact their lives, and steps they can take to address inequity (National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, 2008).

Guiding Principle 3: *Culturally responsive teaching places students at the center of learning.*

Student-centered learning is not a new concept in the field of education, and there are a variety of approaches that fit under the umbrella of student-centered learning, such as collaborative learning, inquiry-based learning, and project-based learning. **Student-centered learning can be defined as an instructional approach in which the students in the classroom shape the content, instructional activities, materials, assessment, and/or pace of the learning.** Student-centered learning also focuses on the idea that students are provided with opportunities to learn from one another rather than solely from the teacher. There has been little research on how to reframe collaborative learning and groupwork for language learners (WIDA, 2014). One



step toward student-centered learning for MLs in particular is making sure that learning goals and objectives—including language objectives for ELs as appropriate—are explained in student-friendly language so that students of all levels of English proficiency can participate in setting goals for their learning and assessing their learning (Gottlieb, 2016; Stiggins et al., 2004).

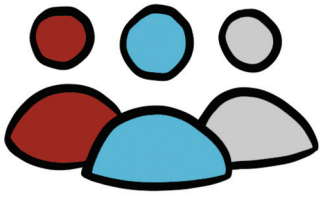
Guiding Principle 4: *Culturally responsive teaching leverages students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds.*

The fourth principle focuses on ways that teaching and learning can give value to students' home language(s), cultures, and experiences. A common misconception in teaching MLs is that they should be discouraged from speaking their home language with their families and peers and that home language use should not be incorporated into instruction. However, research indicates that families should speak their home language with their children, as providing them exposure to the rich, complex language in which they are the most proficient has a positive impact on MLs' development of their home language and also English. This concept may seem counterintuitive to families, who may have been told by esteemed members of their communities, such as teachers, administrators, and even pediatricians, that they need to speak only English at home. Further, instruction that incorporates and builds on MLs' home language(s) will support them in developing literacy in English (August et al., 2009; Carlo et al., 2004; Liang et al., 2005; Restrepo et al., 2010). As educators of MLs, we also need to consider the benefits of a powerful tool for learning that is receiving more attention in today's classroom—translanguaging, or using languages together to maximize communicative potential (García, 2009a).

Hand in hand with building upon students' home languages is learning about and leveraging students' cultures in instruction (Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017). To respect and value

students' home cultures, educators should recognize the funds of knowledge, or the linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural resources MLs bring to the classroom, and build on these resources during their teaching (August & Shanahan, 2006; Moll et al., 1992; Riches & Genesee, 2006). By providing MLs multiple opportunities to draw from and use their home language(s) and cultures, teachers validate students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds and elevate the benefits of being multilingual and multicultural.

Guiding Principle 5: *Culturally responsive teaching unites students' schools, families, and communities.*



Undergirding all four of these principles is our fifth principle—that CRT can serve as a uniting force to bring together students, schools, families, and communities. We first note that we use the term "family" instead of "parent" to recognize the concept of the entire family (e.g., siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and other caregivers or guardians) having an impact on an ML's education, not only parents. When examining the relationship between schools and families, we know that when MLs feel welcomed in their classrooms and schools, this positive sentiment can extend to their families, helping cement their trust. We also need to consider the shift from the term "family involvement," or families being physically present in the school building, to "family engagement," or considering multiple ways in which families may contribute to their children's education (Baker et al., 2016). It is also well documented that family engagement is a predictor of students' academic achievement (Arias, 2015; Breiseth et al., 2011; Hattie, 2009, 2012). In addition, communities play a vital role in supporting CRT. Community-based organizations and partnerships also play a vital role in rounding out and supporting the relationship between schools and families, enabling them to feel they truly belong in both contexts (Arias, 2015). Not only do MLs benefit from culturally responsive instruction, but their non-ML peers, teachers, families, and communities do as well.

Application Activity 1b. Rank the Guiding Principles

Directions: Rank the five guiding principles in order of importance to you. (*Note*: You will be asked to rank them again in the final chapter of this book.)

- ____ Culturally responsive teaching is assets-based.
- ____ Culturally responsive teaching simultaneously supports and challenges students.
- ____ Culturally responsive teaching places students at the center of learning.
- ____ Culturally responsive teaching leverages students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
- ____ CRT unites students' schools, families, and communities.

Reflection Question

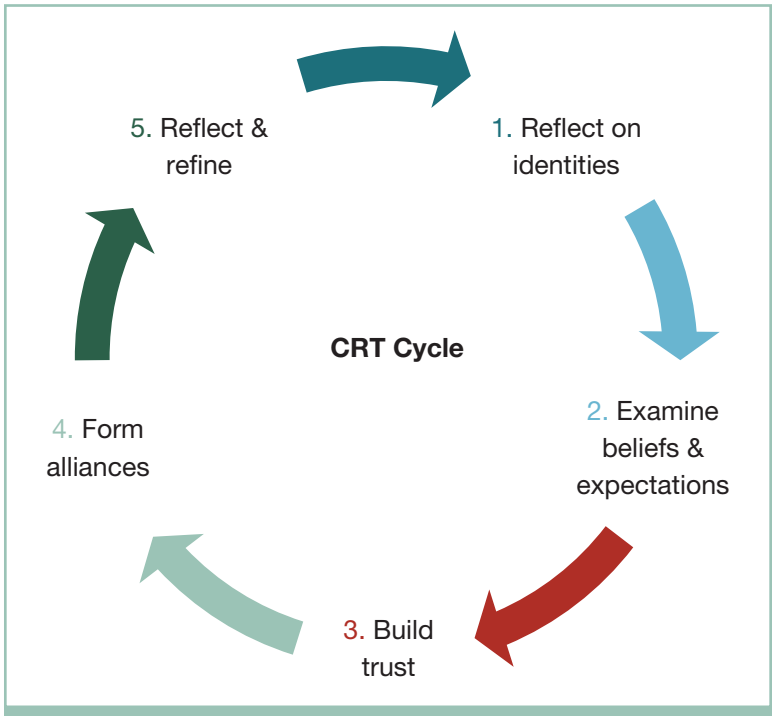
Why did you rank them in the order that you did?

THE ML CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING CYCLE

While culturally responsive teaching may not yet be on everyone's radar, all educators need to see themselves as culturally responsive. Previously, we have stressed that all teachers need to share the responsibility for teaching MLs, and all teachers should teach academic language and culture simultaneously (Staehr Fenner, 2014; Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017). Similarly,

all teachers need to teach in their area of expertise in a way that is culturally responsive for all learners. To do so, we recommend educators address our five cyclical CRT cycle components, as detailed in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4 CRT Cycle Components



1. **Reflect on implicit personal identities, including biases.** Hammond (2015) notes that "culture is like the air we breathe, permeating all we do. And the hardest culture to examine is often our own because it shapes our actions in ways that seem invisible and normal" (p. 55). Similarly, Staehr Fenner (2014) urges educators of MLs to reflect on their own culture and the impact it may unwittingly have on the way in which educators engage with students. As educators, we will not make progress until we move out of our comfort zones and confront anything standing in the way of us growing as CRT educators, recognizing that discomfort means we are making progress.

2. **Examine beliefs and expectations about MLs and their families.** After reflecting on their own cultures and implicit biases, we recommend educators expand their sphere

to look more deeply at their beliefs and expectations when it comes to MLs and their families. We encourage educators to determine what they already know and believe, think about where there are misunderstandings, and learn where to find more information to have a more complete picture of their students and families.

3. **Build trust with MLs and their families.** The next step in becoming a more culturally responsive educator is to increase trust among MLs as well as their families. Trust is crucial in creating a safe classroom space in which MLs feel free to take risks with language and content (Staehr Fenner, 2014; Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017). In addition, an established sense of student–teacher trust enables students' brains to focus on activities that include creativity, learning, and higher-order thinking (Hammond, 2015).

4. **Form alliances with educators and students to do the hard work of CRT.** At this point, educators are ready to collaborate to leverage each other's expertise to make progress in furthering their journey as CRT educators. To do so, it is important for educators to determine who their allies might be, joining forces with fellow educators who also seem open to the idea of growing as CRT educators (NEA, 2015). Critical to the work is also forming alliances with ML students, who often get left out of the equation. Alliances with students offer the opportunity for teachers to practice validation, or acknowledging the inequities inside and outside the school walls that impact MLs and validating their ways of speaking and being that may have been labeled "wrong" in the mainstream school culture (Hammond, 2015).

5. **Reflect, refine, and begin the process again.** In our work as educators, we should never be satisfied with the status quo. Therefore, this process is cyclical; we need to constantly reflect on our progress, refine our approaches, and keep going. We recommend taking notes in this book as well as keeping a reflection journal that allows you to hit the pause button and be honest about the areas that are going well and about places you

may need to refine your approach. Then, you can discuss the impact of your work with your allies (including ML students and families) to also determine areas that can be improved to carry over into your work in Step 1.

Reflection Journal

Something I learned about myself that might impact my teaching is . . .

Summary of Key Ideas

- This book is an important addition to the field because we need to examine and repair systemic inequities in ML education.
- Multilingual learners are students whose parent or guardian reports speaking one or more languages other than English at home. They may or may not qualify for ESOL, depending on their level of English proficiency.
- There are multiple definitions of culture and CRT. No matter the definition, we must ensure that CRT is used as a means to ameliorate inequity for MLs.
- CRT is critical for MLs because of mismatches between MLs, teachers, and families; the bullying of MLs; and the focus on CRT in the TESOL standards, among many other reasons.

- Five guiding principles of CRT frame our work, all situated within a context of increasing MLs' equity:
  1. Culturally responsive teaching is assets-based.
  2. Culturally responsive teaching simultaneously supports and challenges students.
  3. Culturally responsive teaching places students at the center of learning.
  4. Culturally responsive teaching leverages students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds.
  5. CRT unites students' schools, families, and communities.
- The culturally responsive teaching cycle allows educators to enter into and constantly refine their work as CRT educators.

Chapter 1 Reflection Questions

1. How would you define your own sense of urgency in ensuring CRT for multilingual learners?

2. Reflect on the five guiding principles for CRT. Which is an area of strength for you? Which principle might you wish to work on?

3. What are you wondering about as you move on to Chapter 2?

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