MAKE IT MEANINGFUL: BRINGING LEARNING TO LIFE WITH CULTURALLY RELEVANT TEACHING
Webinar Goals

• To explain what culturally relevant teaching is and where the idea comes from
• To discuss the advantages of four aspects of culturally relevant teaching:
  – relationships
  – materials
  – language
  – activities
• To share practical teaching ideas related to those four aspects.
Background: Culturally Relevant Teaching

Gloria Ladson-Billings
Photo: University of Wisconsin

Geneva Gay
Photo: University of Wisconsin

Lisa Delpit
Photo: Georgia State University
Most U.S. Students

CRT

Most U.S. Teachers
CRT in the Global Context

• Students and teachers may differ in:
  – Origin
  – Social Class
  – Religion
  – Generation
  – Interests
  – Language
  – Values
Good teaching

Teacher -> Content <- Students
Emphasis in Traditional Teaching

Teacher → Content → Students

Teacher → Content

Content → Students
Culturally Relevant Relationships

Teacher

Content

Students

• Relationships
Culturally Relevant Curriculum

- Teacher
- Content
- Students
  - Materials
  - Language
  - Activities
Culturally Relevant Teaching

Teacher

- Relationships

Content

Students

- Materials
- Language
- Activities
“In order to teach you, I must know you.”
–Native Alaskan Teacher
“When you don’t have a spark of chemistry, close relationships can be engineered.”
–Hunter Gelbach, Harvard Professor
How to Build Relationships with Students

• Spend time with students outside of class
• Be polite, open, and friendly with students
• Learn about “youth culture”
• Give students a survey to learn about them
• Use “get to know you” activities at the beginning of class
Key Teaching Idea: Find Someone Like You

1. I like French fries. I play volleyball. I have 2 brothers. My birthday is in May.

2. Who do you play with?

3. Lia likes French fries, too. Juan plays volleyball, too. Ana has 2 brothers, too. Pablo’s birthday is in May, too.

4. I also play volleyball!
Culturally Relevant Materials
Culturally Relevant Materials...

- ...show examples of students’ lives.
- ...include symbols and images that students recognize.
- ...build on students’ prior knowledge.
- ...show students that their personal experiences are important.
- ...can be made by students.
Key Teaching Idea: Song re-write

1. Choose a song your students know and love.
2. If the song is in your language, ask students to translate it to English.
3. If the song is in English, ask students to rewrite it as if the singer were from their culture.
4. Have students perform their songs for the class.
Song Re-write: We Are the Champions by Queen

We are the champions, my friends.
And we’ll keep on fighting ‘til the end!
We’re stuck in traffic, in DC.
And we’ll be in this traffic jam ‘til lunch time!
Song Re-write: We Are the Champions by Queen

We are the champions, my friends.
And we’ll keep on fighting ‘til the end!

We are ________________, my __________.
And we’ll _________________ ‘til __________.
Culturally Relevant Language

Standard English

Local English

23
Culturally Relevant Language Examples

• Local greetings
• “Key phrases” from another language
• Public Speaking Norms
• Directness or Indirectness
• Idiomatic expressions
Culturally Relevant Activities...

• ... are similar to student’s outside-of-school experiences.
• ... are useful to students.
• ... provide opportunities for success.
• ... build on students’ multiple intelligences.
Examples: Culturally Relevant Activities

• Writing e-mails, text messages, tweets, or status updates.
• Using open-ended questions.
• Asking students to write or speak about themselves and their own lives.
• Building lessons around student choice.
Key Teaching Idea: Choice Lessons

Objective: Students will give advice using “should.”
Conclusion

Teacher

• Relationships

Content

• Materials
• Language
• Activities

Students
Final Question

What idea(s) from this webinar will you try in your classroom?
Thanks everyone!
Follow me on Twitter: @tabithakidwell

References


