

Muhammad, G. (2021). *Cultivating genius: An equity framework for culturally and historically responsive literacy*. Scholastic.

Identity is composed of who we think we are, who others say we are and who we desire to be. Our students must be able to tell their own stories and those stories and identities must begin with positivity and excellence. To achieve academic success, students must also be able to see themselves and their identities represented in their curricula and they must also be given the opportunity to learn about the cultures and identities of others. Students should also be exposed to this education and information and must be able to authentically see themselves in their learning in their K-12 classrooms and not have to wait until college courses. In a K-12 classroom, teachers must not only teach skills but also teach students to know, validate and celebrate who they are and who they wish to become in the future. Some ways you can help students understand and teach identity is by asking students how they see themselves. This can be done through engaging in conversations with them directly or through writing. You can ask questions such as, how would you describe yourself to someone that doesn't know you? What would your family or friends say about you? Do you feel that my teaching reflects your identity? If not, how could it be improved? Talking to your students and engaging in dialogue helps students feel that their perspectives, their voices and identities are valued. Other ways to understand and teach identity is through understanding the origins of your name. Our names are a part of our identities and are often the first thing we say when asked who we are. Our names have stories and carry our cultures, traditions, values and pasts. Students can also create digital stories telling and sharing who they are or about the communities, neighborhoods and families they come from. It is also important to engage deeply in Black studies as doing so, teachers can become better prepared to respond to the needs of students of color and other marginalized students in school. With all this said, before you can teach students about their identities you must first do the work to understand your own identity.

Hammond, Z. (2015). *Culturally responsive teaching and the brain: Promoting authentic engagement and rigor among culturally and linguistically diverse students*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

In this chapter of *Culturally Responsive Teaching and The Brain* by Zaretta Hammond, Hammond looks at what being a culturally responsive educator means. It is not a set of strategies implemented in the classroom but a mindset of the educator, a way of looking at the world and a way of looking at your students. Being a culturally responsive teacher means that you choose to engage in self reflection and commit to the journey of doing the inside-out work needed to check our implicit biases, practicing social-emotional awareness, and holding an inquiry stance when interacting with our students. Hammond offers strategies in improving your culturally responsive teaching practice such as beginning with an intention and committing to the process. Committing to the process means a commitment to becoming a lifelong learner and educating yourself and learning from mentors from similar backgrounds. Next is Self-Examination, by examining your own cultural identities and stepping back to understand our own “normal” as our own cultural values shape our expectations in the classroom and the way we respond to our students. Evaluating our own identities and understanding what we deem to be normal helps us understand that we all, even our students, have their own identities, their own “normal,” and their own ways of interacting with others that we as teachers may at times see as problematic. In order to work through and uncover our implicit biases you must identify your cultural frame of reference, widen your cultural aperture and identify our key triggers. Doing the work of finding your cultural frame of reference means asking and answering questions of your own upbringing. How did your identity come to be? What was your lived experience that helped shape who you are as a person and as an educator? When you have a clear understanding of your cultural self, you then begin to understand what drives you and what influences your teaching. Next comes the process of widening your cultural aperture to help us understand that other cultures are different from our own. Finally, identify your triggers. Understanding what your triggers are will help you in anticipating those triggers and planning for your responses in a positive and informative way that benefits your students and the relationship you have with your students.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159-165

In this article, author Gloria Ladson-Billings writes about her findings after conducting a 3-year study of successful teachers of African American students. Instead of providing teaching strategies or some magic formula for “good teaching” she defines Culturally Relevant Pedagogy as specifically committed to collective empowerment. Culturally Relevant Pedagogy rests on three criteria or prepositions which include the following. Students must experience academic success in order to become participants in a democracy. Second, students must develop and maintain cultural competence. Ladson-Billings gives specific examples of her observations of teachers utilizing

students' culture as a vehicle for learning. She observed one teacher use music familiar to students as a way to teach technical aspects of poetry and another teacher involve families in her classroom so students could learn from each others' parents and affirm cultural knowledge. Thirdly, students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status of the current social order. In preparation for active citizenship, students must be provided with the education, information and opportunity to critically analyze the world and society around them. In looking at the data, the author at first had difficulty finding common threads amongst the teachers she observed and studied but then looked at the relationships these teachers had with their students. Some commonalities she found were that the teachers kept the relationship between themselves and their students fluid and equitable, meaning they encouraged their students to act as teachers and teachers acted as learners in the classroom. These teachers lived in and were a part of the communities they taught in. They also encouraged their students to teach each other, be responsible for each other's learning and learn collaboratively. These teachers also exhibited a passion, enthusiasm and excitement for the content that they were teaching.

Stormont, M. (2008). *Increase academic success for children with ADHD using sticky notes and highlighters*. Vol.43, No.5. pp.305-308.

In this article, author Melissa A. Stormont guides her readers through characteristics of students with ADHD and strategies that can be used in the classroom using two simple tools: highlighters and sticky notes. General education teachers are often unprepared for working with the diverse learning needs of their students. Students with ADHD make up 3-5% of the school age population and are most often educated in a general education classroom. This population of students often have characteristics that interfere with their learning and task completion. These unique characteristics include selective attention problems which makes it challenging to listen to the most important parts of a lesson making it difficult to even begin an activity or assignment. Sustained Attention problems make it difficult for a student to pay attention long enough to complete a task. Impulsivity makes it difficult for a student to screen thoughts or actions before acting on them. High Levels of verbal and motor activity are another unique characteristic of students with ADHD which is a need to talk and move more than same-aged peers. The author then introduces 20 specific strategies that can be implemented in the classroom using sticky notes and highlighters to help support students with diverse learning needs. Some examples include support when learning math facts. Students can use a highlighter to highlight the operation signs to be used with different colors. In Math, students can also use sticky notes to organize the steps or processes when trying to remember the steps to solving a particular problem e.g. the steps in long division. Teachers can create a list of tasks to be completed and students

can highlight completed tasks throughout the day. Sticky notes can also be used as reminders of students schedules or can be used as free movement passes. To help with impulsivity teachers can list activity options for students to do when an assignment is done. The student can then highlight their option. Support for students with diverse learning needs don't have to be complicated or costly. Simple tools can be just as effective.

Makapugay, M. (2022, January 27) personal communication.

Meagan Makapuguy is the Educational Specialist for 3rd grade at Explorer Elementary. We meet weekly to discuss students on caseload but in our interview, I asked for other ways I can support my neuro-diverse students that I may not have yet explored. I was also looking for support that would benefit all of my students. Some suggestions she had after observing my classroom were to use more visuals. Explaining directions verbally, demonstrating the directions then providing directions visually that students can refer to as they work through lessons. Having a few students repeat directions or demonstrate is also effective in supporting all students. She also noticed I had my schedule posted in my Morning Meeting slides that students were not able to see throughout the day. She reminded me of the importance of having a visual schedule that students can refer to throughout the day. All students find it comforting to see what to expect throughout the day; this includes being able to see when to expect snacks and breaks. Having student specific schedules is also important, reducing the element of surprise when students are pulled out for services. She also noticed that some students may be experiencing sensory overload with the noise coming in from my open windows which unfortunately must be open at this time. My classroom is near a busy street with traffic noise that includes sirens, honking horns and loud motorcycles. She suggested sitting students sensitive to noise away from the windows as it is disruptive to them and their learning. Meagan was full of valuable information that will help support all my students as I do have a diverse classroom with students of varied abilities and needs.

Hentges, J. Reading instruction in the middle years: what actually works? *Global Education Journal* pp.109-113

As teachers we must ask ourselves: what can we do to engage adolescent middle year learners to value written language and through authentic real world application of literacy, how can we support academic achievement for these students? What actually works for the middle year readers? The struggling middle year student, individually, must develop confidence that they can understand what they read. To achieve this, students can use reading strategies and learning techniques that help students make meaning of text such as graphic organizers. This visual support helps them to stay

focused on their thinking which will assist them to hold their thinking long enough to make meaning of the text. Also, teaching reading skills through social interactions with their peers can motivate students to take on authentic control of their learning. Purposely planning to meet the individual needs of these struggling readers can be addressed in the following settings: peer partner or small group instruction.