

# Culturally Responsive Practices for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students with Learning Disabilities

**Cheryl A. Utley**

*Lead Consultant*

*Research, Education, and Policy Consultant Firm*

**Festus E. Obiakor**

*University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee*

**Jeffrey P. Bakken**

*Illinois State University*

---

*This article discusses culturally responsive frameworks, principles, pedagogy, and curriculum for general and special educators who work with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students with learning disabilities (LD). Culturally responsive teaching has critical features that could benefit CLD students with LD. For example, culturally responsive practices require general and special educators to use culturally sound techniques as they maximize the potential of CLD learners with LD.*

---

**I**t has become very clear that there is greater diversity within our nation and within the United States public school system than ever before. According to the report by the Institute of Education Sciences (2010) entitled *Status and Trends in the Education of Racial and Ethnic Minorities*, the demographic pattern of the

Hispanic population is expected to grow at a faster rate than most other races/ethnicities. In the year 2025, about 21 percent of the population is expected to be of Hispanic ethnicity. In addition, the growth rate for Whites is expected to be slower than the rate for other races/ethnicities, decreasing their share of the total population. In 2025, the distribution of the population is expected to be 58 percent White, 21 percent Hispanic, 12 percent Black, 6 percent Asian, 2 percent two or more races, 1 percent American Indian/Alaska Native, and less than 1 percent Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. (p. 1)

In addition, current statistics show that 1 in 5 children lives in poverty (Children's Defense Fund, 2001), and about 1 in 10 children have limited proficiency in English (Kindler, 2002).

Today's teaching force, however, remains overwhelmingly White, middle class, and monolingual (Ladson-Billings, 2001) with about 85% of teachers being female and 15% male. In a report on special education personnel needs (Office of Special Education Programs, 2002), it was noted that:

On average, almost one-fourth of special education teachers' students are from a cultural or linguistic group different from their own, and 7 percent are English language learners (ELL). The nation's changing school demographics are creating a demand for new teaching skills. Unfortunately, many special educators indicate

they have not mastered the skills needed to accommodate culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. This skill deficiency is not surprising because 51 percent of recently prepared special educators said their preservice programs did not address the needs of this student population. Furthermore, the majority of today's special education teachers completed their initial preparation when the nation's students were considerably more homogeneous (p. 3).

Increasingly, general and special educators are faced with overwhelming challenges to educate CLD students with LD to live in society when their lives are complex because of a number of factors such as race, poverty, social class, gender, language, religion, ability, and/or age (Gollnick & Chinn, 2002). Some of these challenges, as indicated by local and national school data, have suggested that the exclusion rates of African American, Hispanic American, and Native American students from general education programs are higher than the rates of White students (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Morrison, Anthony, Storino, & Dillon, 2001). National Center for Education Statistics, 2007; Morrison et al., 2001; Skiba et al. 2002). For example, according to Harry and Klinger (2006), students from CLD backgrounds were found to have different learning styles from those of their White peers and their low achievement in general education classrooms resulted in their subsequent referral to special education programs. Even more disturbing are the findings indicating that harsh punitive measures (e.g., suspensions) in schools are (a) ineffective (e.g., Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006); (b) prime to predicting poor school outcomes (Obiakor, 2001, 2007); and (c) linked to disproportionality in special education programs (Skiba, Michael, et al., 2002; Skiba, Poloni-Staudinger, Simmons, Feggins-Azziz, & Chung, 2005).

The cultural repertoires of students from CLD backgrounds have an impact on their learning, school progress, and behavior in the classroom (Delpit, 1988; Delpit, 1992, 1995; Delpit & Dowdy, 2002; Obiakor, 2001; Rueda, 2007). For instance, Delpit (1992) observed that the schooling process places CLD students at risk for failure in five ways, namely:

- (1) failure to recognize and address problems that arise when there is a marked cultural difference between students and the school—under such circumstances two problems may evolve: misreading of students' aptitudes, intent, or abilities as a result of differences in cultural styles of language use and interactional patterns; and utilizing styles of instruction and/or discipline that are at odds with community norms;
- (2) stereotyping;
- (3) assuming that the failure of a child to thrive intellectually is due to a deficit in the child rather than a deficit in teaching, and subsequently teaching less when one should be teaching more;
- (4) maintaining ignorance about community norms of parenting and child-rearing, which can lead to adversarial relationships with parents and the development of school people of a "messiah complex"—that is, the view that schools must save the children from their communities rather than work with communities toward excellence; and
- (5) making invisible the histories and realities of children and communities of color in the communities and educators' minds. (p. 283)

Similarly, Bowman (1994) stated that “the explanation for the differences in school performance lies in the difference in life experiences between groups—the worlds in which children of different cultural and socioeconomic groups live do not encourage the same beliefs and attitudes nor do they emphasize the same skills. By ignoring the differences between children—their experiences, their beliefs, their traditional practices —schools limit their own ability to educate these children” (p. 1). Most recently, Banks et al. (2001) and the National Education Association (2008) noted that cultural, personal, and academic gaps between teachers and students of CLD backgrounds, which is the core relationship of learning, are contributing factors to their underachievement in school. Given these demographic imperatives and special education issues, scholars and educators (e.g., Bennett, 1995; Burstein & Cabello, 1989; Dilworth, 1990; Obiakor, 2001, 2007; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005a; Sleeter, 1995; Utley & Obiakor, 2001; Zumwalt, & Craig, 2005). have suggested that general and special educators must (a) be culturally sensitive and attuned to the diverse life experiences that CLD students with LD bring to the classroom; (b) provide learning and social experiences that meet their instructional needs; and (c) have the ability to understand cultural ways of learning.

How can general and special educators and school leaders optimize learning and school achievements for CLD students with LD in today’s classroom settings when they are ill-prepared or unprepared? How can general and special educators develop authentic teacher-student relationships with these students? One compelling argument to understanding cultural and experiential backgrounds of these students is to engage in culturally responsive teaching. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to discuss the culturally responsive principles for general and special educators who teach CLD students with LD.

### **CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE FRAMEWORK IN GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

To discuss culturally responsive framework in general and special education, it is critical to define “culture” and related culturally responsive teaching principles.

#### ***Culture***

There are many perspectives on how to define culture and its intricacies. For example, historically, culture is defined as social heritage or tradition that is passed on to future generations. Behaviorally defined, culture is shared, learned human behavior, and a way of life. Functionally, culture is defined as the way human beings solve problems or adapt to the environment. For purposes of this article, culture, as defined by Bodley (2010) is “a body of learned behaviors common to a given human society, acts rather like a template (i.e., it has predictable form and content), shaping behavior and consciousness within a human society from generation to generation. So culture resides in all learned behavior and in some shaping template or consciousness prior to behavior as well” (p. 1.) Bodley further noted that there are important principles that follow this definition of culture:

- If the process of learning is an essential characteristic of culture, then teaching also is a crucial characteristic. The way culture is taught and reproduced is itself an important component of culture.

- Because the relationship between what is taught and what is learned is not absolute (some of what is taught is lost, while new discoveries are constantly being made), culture exists in a constant state of change.

Meaning systems consist of negotiated agreements— members of a human society must agree to relationships between a word, behavior, or other symbol and their corresponding significance or meaning. To the extent that culture consists of systems of meaning, it also consists of negotiated agreements and processes of negotiation. Because meaning systems involve relationships which are not essential and universal (the word “door” has no essential connection to the physical object; we simply agree that it shall have that meaning when we speak or write in English), different human societies will inevitably agree upon different relationships and meanings; this is a relativistic way of describing culture. Based upon the above definitions, culture is more than just one characteristic, such as race or ethnicity; culture reflects the unique blending of characteristics among individuals within groups and may include variables such as socioeconomic status, life experiences, gender, language, education, sexual orientation, psychological state, and political viewpoints. As cultural beings, we belong to and share the values of many different cultural groups, depending on our relationships and interactions with other individuals in society (Lindsey, Roberts, & Campbell- Jones, 2005).

### ***Culturally Responsive Teaching Principles***

Culturally responsive teaching is a foundational concept of multicultural education and involves many things: curriculum content, learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, and performance assessments (Gay, 2002). Three educational perspectives of culturally responsive teaching have been visible in the literature. The first educational perspective by Ladson-Billing (1995) defined culturally responsive teaching as an approach that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impact knowledge, skills, and attitudes of students. The second perspective by Gay (2000) defined “culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students” (p. 29). The third perspective is by Nieto and Boder (2008) which defined culturally responsive teaching as learning that is “actively constructed, connected to experience, influenced by cultural differences, developed within a social context, and created within a community” (p. 3). They noted that the conditions in U.S. society and schools have been “consistently, systematically, and disproportionately unequal and unfair for students who are different from the mainstream. Therefore, a personal and collective transformation of teachers is needed, which includes learning from and with CLD students, and challenging bias within both oneself and one’s school.

Culturally responsive teaching principles encompass three dimensions: (a) academic achievement—making learning rigorous, exciting, challenging, and equitable with high standards; (b) cultural competence—knowing and facilitating the learning process in different cultural and linguistic groups; and (c) sociopolitical consciousness—recognizing and assisting CLD students in the understanding that education and schooling do not occur in a vacuum (Au, 2010; Gay, 2002; Nieto, 1999;

Nieto & Boder, 2008). This strategy facilitates and supports the acquisition of new knowledge, skills, and achievement outcomes for CLD students with LD. The culturally responsive teaching framework does not replace the use of (a) academic data to monitor school progress, (b) effective instructional strategies, and (c) use of sound educational principles and practices. It requires general and special educators to create structured learning environments, develop and implement supportive classroom environments, and provide access to opportunities and resources for CLD students with LD, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds. For general and special educators to be effective practitioners, they must have a working knowledge of these dimensions and their interactive effects on how to conduct assessments and teach in a culturally sensitive and affirming manner.

Building culturally responsive teaching principles requires general and special educators to (a) build trust among their students, (b) become culturally literate, (c) use appropriate diagnostic and assessment approaches, (d) use culturally sound questioning techniques, (e) provide effective feedback, (f) analyze content in instructional materials, and (g) establish positive home-school-community relationships (Algozzine, O'Shea, & Obiakor, 2009; Murtadha-Watts & Stoughton, 2004; Nieto & Boder, 2008; Obiakor, 2006, 2007; Obiakor & Beachum, 2005a; Pewewardy, 1998; Reyher, 1992, 1994). Validating cultural and linguistic experiences of CLD students with LD in the schooling process, curriculum, and instructional content is a way to affirm their self-identity. The cultural lens of validating cultural and linguistic experiences creates multiple ways of seeing and perceiving meaningful experiences of individuals in a culturally diverse society (Gay & Kirkland, 2002; Lemoine, Maddahian, Patton, Ross, & Scrugs, 2006). In the end, culturally responsive teaching uses the students' cultural beliefs, language, and prior learning experiences to build bridges to new knowledge and the understanding of skills for success in school.

Culturally responsive teaching has critical features that could benefit CLD students with LD (Obiakor, 2007). The most recent report by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (2010) stated that in the differential diagnostic process, "cultural and linguistic factors do not preclude the possibility that an individual also has LD" (p. 9); a comprehensive assessment must address all issues of suspected disability, including cultural sensitivity, knowledge, and skill on the part of team members to understand the interactive factors of language and literacy development in bilingual students (Macswan & Rolstad, 2006; Petrovic, 2010). Formal assessment instruments and procedures must be non-discriminatory, non-biased, and address language needs that are responsive to the CLD students' needs (IDEIA, 2004). The interpretation of results must be done cautiously with consideration of all of the culturally and linguistic factors that may impact these student's abilities to learn. The multidisciplinary team must make an informed and data-based decision, which includes knowledge about the cultural and causal factors impacting CLD students' learning and behavioral problems.

### ***Proactive Culturally Infused Interventions***

The recent emphasis on Response-to-Intervention (RTI) (see IDEIA, 2004) presents a promising avenue to gather data to make informed decisions about CLD students with LD. In the pre-referral phase, cultural responsive practices require

general and special educators to have knowledge concerning the (a) CLD students' socio-cultural, linguistic, racial/ethnic background information, (b) student performance records, (c) reasons for academic failure, (d) interpretations of the assessment results, and (e) design of alternative instructional procedures (Ortiz, 2002; Rinaldi & Samson, 2008). Clearly, cultural accommodations in teaching, instruction, and interventions are critical to knowing how CLD students with LD learn in the classroom (Rueda, 2007). Significant to understanding that cultural factors influence learning, the gathering of school data, along with anecdotal information from the parents of CLD students with LD and teachers can provide a more complete picture of these students' learning characteristics.

In an effort to prepare and teach CLD students with LD effectively, general and special educators must be knowledgeable about how culture affects their students' experiences, learning styles, preferences, and behaviors in the classroom as they (a) apply the skills/strategies that need to be infused in the curriculum and management of the classroom; (b) to use educational resources to support CLD students, and (c) monitor their students' performance on tests and interventions. Targeting all three of these elements can be done by implementing culturally responsive practices that support and monitor the performance of CLD students (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008). As illustrated, in Figure 1, the components (i.e., prevention, effective instruction, and pupil monitoring) of an effective instructional model for a culturally responsive classroom include four major categories: (a) school entry/school readiness, (b) instructional format, (c) tier 1, and (d) tier 2. These tiers represent levels in a Response-to-Intervention (RTI) model (Brown-Chidsey & Steege, 2010). School entry/readiness is the prevention of school failure and pre-referral phase of identifying CLD students with LD which includes (a) the assessment of "academic and behavioral risk markers," (b) language, and (c) readiness skills as early as possible. The instructional format category describes five effective instructional practices documented through empirical research studies (e.g., classroom structure, movement, feedback, communal learning, and monitoring progress). Tiers 1 and 2 represent features of whole classroom and small group instruction.

### **TARGETING PROBLEMS AND CREATING SOLUTIONS: A LOOK AT THE FUTURE**

Some students with LD camouflage their learning problems by engaging in problem behaviors. Sadly, many educational professionals and programs focus on these behaviors instead of the learning problems (Obiakor & Beachum, 2005b; Williams & Obiakor, 2009). As a result, they solve problems that do not exist. For instance, there is a difference between an inability to solve a math problem and the refusal to solve that math problem. By the way, this refusal may be an unwillingness to face the humiliation of not knowing how to solve the math problem. This frustration gets to be more intense, especially when CLD learners are misidentified, misclassified, mislabeled, misplaced, and misinstructed (Obiakor, 2007). To a large extent, numerous educational problems arise when general and special educators fail to consider the role of culture and the life experiences that CLD students with LD may bring to school. Earlier, Gay (2002) noted that the more variance that there is between students' cultural, racial, ethnic, and intellectual characteristics and the normative standards of schools, the greater are the chances their school achievement will

be compromised by low or negative teacher expectations. Children of color, poverty, and disability are highly variant on these criteria of normalcy, and are subjected to greater unfair teacher attitudes, expectations, and actions. Their differences that are most important for educational purposes (such as background experiences, perspectives, values, and cultural socialization) are not as readily apparent as physical traits. Therefore, they require a deep knowledge and understanding that many teachers do not have, or do not value. (p. 213)

**Figure 1. Components of an Effective Instructional Model for Culturally Responsive Classrooms**

<p><i>School Entry—Account for language readiness skill gaps through</i></p> <p>Student Screening</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access early school skills</li> <li>• Organize student grouping</li> <li>• Structure classroom activities on the basis of screening outcomes</li> <li>• Identify at-risk students early enough</li> </ul>	<p><i>Instructional Format—Provide immediate/urgent and intensive instruction through</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Structuring classroom activities with empirical support for CLD students</li> <li>• Accounting for the importance of movement and verve with such activities that include ample academic responding opportunities, brisk pacing, positive reinforcement, and corrective feedback</li> <li>• Monitoring the progress of at-risk students weekly</li> <li>• Maintaining high expectations and affirming students</li> </ul>	<p><i>Tier 1—Whole Classroom Instruction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLD students continue receiving structured/dynamic instruction</li> <li>• Student performance monitored quarterly</li> </ul> <p><i>Tier 2—Small group instruction</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CLD students who show low responding receive additional small-group instruction to increase response rates and peer-mediated activities</li> <li>• Student performance monitored weekly</li> </ul>
--	--	---

Source: Cartledge, G., & Kourea, L. (2008). Culturally responsive classrooms for culturally diverse students with and at risk for disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 74(3), 351-371.

Scholars such as Cartledge (2010), Ewing (1995), Gay (2002), Obiakor et al. (2004), Harry and Klingner (2006) noted that CLD students with LD have different behavioral patterns that frequently result in (a) a misdiagnosis of behaviors, (b) inappropriate interpretations of behaviors, (c) deterioration of interpersonal respect between teachers and students, (c) increased attention to controlling student behavior, (d) poor use of instructional time, (e) ill-defined classifications and labels, and (f) dysfunctional educational programs. The “cycle of thinking” that perpetuates the notion that social behaviors are to be judged and labeled as deviant and dysfunctional must be refuted and transformed. General and special educators must acknowledge the impact of culture and the social environment as critical factors when developing effective, sound educational and behavioral practices in the pre-referral and subsequent identification of CLD students with LD (Boykin et al., 2005; Kea & Utley, 1998).

**Figure 2. Proactive Culturally (Responsive) Behavior Management Strategies**

---

Employ teacher movement patterns in an un-intrusive manner rather than in an aversive manner.

Use peer mediators or peer jury to facilitate dispute resolution occurring between peers.

Use role-playing techniques that actively involve culturally diverse students in developing alternative solutions aimed at producing acceptable behavior.

Carefully select timing and use of time-out procedures in order to eliminate feelings of alienation, powerlessness, and peer estrangement.

Use praise to reinforce acceptable behavior only if approved by the student.

Use culturally sensitive counseling techniques. The educator's understanding of the student's world view, values, beliefs, and behaviors that are deeply rooted in their culture will be enhanced, thus minimizing the misinterpretation of culturally-based behavior.

Recognize accomplishments and employ public (e.g., name on bulletin board) recognition as positive reinforcement.

Avoid confronting, reprimanding, and criticizing student in front of peers. Allow student to save face in presence of peers.

If aversive disciplinary approach is used, discuss and implement in privacy. Humiliation can wound pride and erode peer respect.

Select social reinforcers that focus on affective, group-conscious and cooperative activities.

Use modeling with careful consideration of various psychosocial variables (gender, race, ethnicity, social class).

Source: From "Culture: A Neglected Factor in Behavior Management Strategies" by N. Ewing, in F. E. Obiakor & B. Algozzine (Eds.), *Managing problem behaviors: perspectives for general and special educators*, (pp. 96-114), Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt, 1995.

---

For these students with LD, the research literature for developing prescriptive culturally responsive behavior management programs to prevent discipline problems is virtually non-existent (Ewing, 1995). Three prerequisites underlie the abilities of general and special educators to manage CLD classrooms in culturally responsive ways (Howard, 2003; Weinstein, Curran, & Tomlinson-Clarke, 2003). First, general and special educators must recognize that we are all cultural beings with our own beliefs, biases, and assumptions about human behavior. Second, general and special educators must acknowledge the cultural, racial, ethnic, and class differences that exist among people. And third, culturally responsive classroom management procedures require general and special educators to understand the ways that public schools reflect and perpetuate discriminatory practices of the larger society. These



researchers view classroom management tasks through the lens of cultural diversity and suggest that general and special educators (a) create a physical setting that supports academic and social goals, (b) establish expectations for behavior, (c) communicate with students in culturally consistent ways, (d) develop a caring classroom environment, (e) work with families, and (f) use appropriate interventions to assist students with behavior problems. Scholars such as Cartledge and Milburn (1995), Cartledge and Kourea (2008), Ewing (1995), Obiakor (2008), Obiakor et al. (2004), and Utley, Kozleski, Smith, and Draper (2002) have identified proactive culturally (responsive) behavior management strategies that can be incorporated into positive behavior support (PBS) programs across tier 1 (whole school), tier 2 (small group), and tier 3 (individual). As illustrated in Figure 2, these procedures are also evidence-based and require general and special educators to be proactive and not reactive (i.e., waiting for defiant and disruptive model). In addition, these procedures do not involve punishment and/or punitive measures of discipline.

The primary goal of culturally responsive pedagogy and the curriculum is to infuse an understanding of students' prior knowledge and language to build rich connections to their cultural and linguistic backgrounds within family and community contexts (Algozzine et al. 2009; Brown, 2003, 2004; Dukes & Ming, 2010; Irvine et al., 2000; Jackson, 1994; McCaleb, 1994; Menchaca, 2001; Milner, 2010; Nichols, Rupley, & Webb-Johnson, 2000; Reyhner, 1992). According to Kea and Campbell-Whately (2004), culturally responsive pedagogy consists of context-embedded instruction for meaningful content; a content rich curriculum to develop positive attitudes and pride in their culture; and equitable pedagogy which varies according to the CLD students' learning styles and teachers' styles of teaching. Schmidt and Ma (2006) described seven characteristics essential to the implementation of culturally responsive pedagogy, namely:

- High expectations—supporting students as they develop the literacy appropriate to their age and gender
- Positive relationships with families and communities—demonstrating clear connections with student families and communities in terms of curriculum content and relationships
- Cultural sensitivity—reshaped curriculum—mediated for culturally valued knowledge, connecting with standards-based curriculum as well as individual students' cultural backgrounds
- Active teaching methods—involving students in a variety of reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing behaviors throughout the lesson plan
- Teacher as facilitator—presenting information, briefly giving directions, summarizing responses, and working with small groups, pairs, and individuals
- Student control of portions of the lesson—“healthy hum”—talking at conversation levels around the topic studied with their completing assignments in small groups and pairs
- Instruction around groups and pairs—low anxiety—completing assignments individually, but usually in small groups or pairs with time to share ideas and think critically about the work. (p. 121)

## CONCLUSION

Culturally responsive principles, instructional methods, and management procedures are important for the general and special education of all learners (Murtadha-Watts & Stoughton (2004). Clearly, a greater understanding of the role of culture in the lives of CLD students with LD provides general and special educators with the foundation to infuse culturally rich experiences that foster not only academic achievement but also student empowerment. A culturally responsive classroom values all students for who they are and for the unique cultural experiences that they bring to the learning community. Within a culturally responsive classroom, it is important for general and special educators to reflect on cultural assumptions that underlie lessons in literacy, math, science, and the arts (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). These reflections lead to experiences that are more productive and empowering for CLD students (Pransky & Bailey, 2002; Yost, 2006). Culturally responsive instruction validates CLD students with LD by allowing them to learn how to respect other cultural groups' heritage and history. Additionally, it stresses respect for diversity while creating a safe and inclusive climate (Phuntsog, 1999). To a large measure, it bridges the gap between the school and the home by meeting the learning needs of all students and providing consistency with the values of CLD students' own cultures.

## REFERENCES

- Algozzine, B., O'Shea, D., & Obiakor, F. E. (2009). *Culturally responsive literacy instruction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Au, K. H. (2010). *Culturally responsive instruction as a dimension of new literacies*. Retrieved from <http://www.readingonline.org/newliteracies/au/index.html>
- Banks, J. A., Cookson, P., Gay, G., Hawley, W. D., Irvine, J. J., Nieto, S. (2001). Diversity within unity: Essential principles for teaching and learning in a multicultural society. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 83(3), 196-202.
- Bennett, C. I. (1995). *Comprehensive multicultural education: Theory and practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bodley, J. H. (2010). *A baseline definition of culture*. Retrieved from [http://www.wsu.edu/gened/learn-modules/top\\_culture/culture-definition.html](http://www.wsu.edu/gened/learn-modules/top_culture/culture-definition.html)
- Bowman, B. (1994). *Cultural diversity and academic achievement*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/leadrs/le0bow.htm>
- Boykin, A. W., Albury, A., Tyler, K. M., Hurley, E. A., Bailey, C. T., Miller, O. A. (2005). Culture-based perceptions of academic achievement among low-income elementary students. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 11(4), 339–350.
- Brown, D. F. (2003). Urban teachers' use of culturally responsive management strategies. *Theory Into Practice*, 42(4), 277-282.
- Brown, D. F. (2004). Urban teachers' professed classroom management strategies: Reflections of culturally responsive teaching. *Urban Education*, 39(3), 266-289.
- Brown-Chidsey, & Steege, M. W. (2010). *Response to intervention: Principles for effective practices*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Burstein, N. D., & Cabello, B. (1989). Preparing teachers to work with culturally diverse students: A teacher education model. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 40, 9-16.
- Cartledge, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive behavior development and intervention*. Paper presented at the Council for Exceptional Children International Conference, Nashville, TN.
- Cartledge, G., & Kourea, L. (2008). Culturally responsive classrooms for culturally diverse students with and at risk for disabilities. *Exceptional Children*, 74(3), 351-371.

- Cartledge, G., & Milburn, J. F. (1995). *Teaching social skills to children and youth: Innovative approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Children's Defense Fund (2001). *The state of America's children yearbook 2001*. Washington, DC: Author.
- Delpit, L. D. (1988). The silenced dialogue: Power and pedagogy in educating other people's children. *Harvard Educational Review*, 58(3), 280-298.
- Delpit, L. (1992). Education in a multicultural society: Our future's greatest challenge. *Journal of Negro Education*, 61(3), 237-249.
- Delpit, L. (1995). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: New Press.
- Delpit, L., & Dowdy, L. (2002). *The skin that we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom*. New York: New Press.
- Dilworth, M. E. (1990). *Reading between the lines: Teachers and their racial/ethnic cultures* (Teacher Education Monograph No. 11). Washington, DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Teacher Education.
- Dukes, C., & Ming, K. (2010). *Fostering cultural competence*. Retrieved from <http://www.leadership.fau.edu/ICSEI2006/Papers/dukes%20and%20ming.pdf>.
- Ewing, N. (1995). Culture: A neglected factor in behavior management. In F. E. Obiakor & B. Algozzine (Eds.), *Managing problem behaviors: Perspectives for general and special educators* (pp. 96-114). Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.
- Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Gay, G. (2002). Culturally responsive teaching in special education for ethnically diverse students: Setting the stage. *Qualitative Studies in Education*, 15(6), 613-629.
- Gay, G., & Kirkland, K. (2003). Developing cultural critical consciousness and self-reflection in preservice teacher education. *Theory Into Practice*, 42(3), 181-187.
- Gollnick, D. M., & Chinn, P. C. (2002). *Multicultural education in a pluralistic society*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill Prentice-Hall.
- Harry, B., & Klingner, J. (2006). *Why are there so many minority students in special education? Understanding race and disability in schools*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Howard, T. C. (2003). Culturally relevant pedagogy: Ingredients for critical teacher reflection. *Theory into Practice*, 42(3), 195-202.
- Individuals With Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-446. Washington, DC: Office of Special Education Programs.
- Institute of Education Sciences (2010). *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic minorities*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.
- Irvine, J., Armento, B., Causey, V., Jones, J., Frasher, R., & Weinburgh, M. H. (2000). *Culturally responsive lesson plans for elementary and middle grades: A guide for preservice teachers*. New York: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Jackson, F. R. (1994). Seven strategies to support a culturally responsive pedagogy. *Journal of Reading*, 37(4), 298-303.
- Kea, C., & Campbell-Whatley, G. (2004). *Culturally responsive pedagogy: This is how we do it*. Retrieved from <http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/ec/conference/2004/sessions/55pedagogy.pdf>
- Kea, C., & Utley, C. (1998). To teach me is to know me. *Journal of Special Education*, 32(1), 44-47.
- Kindler, A. L. (2002). *Survey of the states' limited English proficient students and available educational programs and services, 2000-2001 summary report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Educational Programs.

- Krezmien, M. P., Leone, P. E., & Achilles, G. M. (2006). Suspension, race, and disability: Analysis of statewide practices and reporting. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 14*, 217–226.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory Into Practice, 34*(3), 159-165.
- Ladson-Billings, G. (2001). *Crossing over to Canaan: The journey of new teachers in diverse classrooms*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lemoine, N., Maddahian, E., Patton, D., Ross, R., & Scrugs, L. (2006). *Applying culturally relevant strategies to systemic reform: Los Angeles Unified School District*. Paper presented at the Creating Opportunities to Learn Conference, Denver, CO.
- Lindsey, R. B., Roberts, L. M., & Campbell-Jones, F. (2005). *The culturally proficient school: An implementation guide for school leaders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Macswan, J., & Rolstad, K. (2006). How language proficiency tests mislead us about ability: Implications for English language learner placement in special education. *Teachers College Record, 108*(11), 2234–2328.
- McCaleb, S. P. (1994). *Building communities of learners: A collaboration among teachers, students, families, and community*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Menchaca, V. D. (2001). Providing a culturally relevant curriculum for Hispanic children. *Multicultural Education, 8*(3), 18–20.
- Mendez, L. M. R., & Knoff, H. M. (2003). Who gets suspended from school and why: A demographic analysis of schools and disciplinary infractions in a large school district. *Education and Treatment of Children, 26*, 30–51.
- Milner, H. R. (2010). *Culturally relevant pedagogy in a diverse urban classroom*. Retrieved from <http://www.springerlink.com.www2.lib.ku.edu:2048/content/95048m18u775v0v3/fulltext.pdf>.
- Morrison, G. M., Anthony, S., Storino, M., & Dillon, C. (2001). An examination of the disciplinary histories and the individual and educational characteristics of students who participate in an in school suspension program. *Education and Treatment of Children, 24*, 276–293.
- Murtadha-Watts K., & Stoughton, E. (2004). Critical cultural knowledge in special education: Reshaping the responsiveness of school leaders. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 37*(2), 1-8.
- National Center for Education Statistics, U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. (2007). *Digest of educational statistics*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office.
- National Education Association (2008). *Promoting educators' cultural competence to better serve culturally diverse students* [NEA policy brief]. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities. (2010). *Comprehensive assessment and evaluation of students with learning disabilities*. Retrieved from <http://ldonline.org>
- Nichols, W. D., Rupley, W. H., & Webb-Johnson, G. (2000). Teacher's role in providing culturally responsive literacy instruction. *Reading Horizons, 41*, 1-18.
- Nieto, S. (1999). *The light in their eyes*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Nieto, S., & Boder, P. (2008). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Obiakor, F. E. (2001). *It even happens in "good" schools: Responding to cultural diversity in today's classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Obiakor, F. E. (2006). Multicultural special education: Effective intervention for today's school. *Intervention in School and Clinic, 42*(3), 148-155.
- Obiakor, F. E. (2007). *Multicultural special education: Culturally responsive teaching*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Obiakor, F. E. (2008). *The eight-step approach to multicultural learning and teaching* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

- Obiakor, F. E., & Beachum, F. D. (2005a). Developing self-empowerment in African American students using the comprehensive support model. *Journal of Negro Education*, 74(1), 18-29.
- Obiakor, F. E., & Beachum, F. D. (2005b). *Urban education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Research, issues and perspectives*. Springfield, IL: Charles C Thomas.
- Obiakor, F. E., Enwefa, S., Utley, C., Obi, S. O., Gwalla-Ogisi, M., & Enwefa, R. (2004). *Serving culturally and linguistically diverse students with emotional and behavioral disorders*. Arlington, VA: The Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders. The Council for Exceptional Children.
- Office of Special Education Programs (2002). *The study of personnel needs in special education* [Summary sheet]. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Ortiz, A. A. (2002). Prevention of school failure and early intervention for English Language Learners. In A. J. Artiles & A. A. Ortiz (Eds.), *English Language Learners with special education needs: Identification, assessment, and instruction* (pp. 31-63). Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics and Delta Systems.
- Petrovic, J. E. (Ed.). (2010). *International perspectives on bilingual education: Policy, practice, and controversy*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishers.
- Pewewardy, C. D. (1998, November). *Culturally responsive teaching for American Indian learners*. Paper presented at the Kansas Institute on Effective Teaching Practices for Indian Education. Lawrence, KS. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 459 981).
- Phuntsog, N. (1999). The magic of culturally responsive pedagogy: In search of the genie's lamp in multicultural education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 26(3), 97-111.
- Pransky, K., & Bailey, F. (2002). To meet your students where they are, first you have to find them: Working with culturally and linguistically diverse at-risk students. *Reading Teacher*, 56(4), 370-383.
- Reyhner, J. (1992). Bilingual education. In J. Reyhner (Ed.), *Teaching American Indian students* (pp. 59-77). Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Rinaldi, C., & Samson, J. (2008). English language learners and response to intervention. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40(5), 6-14.
- Rueda, R. (2007). Cultural accommodations in the classroom: An instructional perspective. *Multiple Voices*, 10(1 & 2), 61-72.
- Schmidt, P. R., & Ma, W. (2006). *50 literacy strategies for culturally responsive teaching, K-8*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Skiba, R. J., Michael, R. S., Nardo, A. C., & Peterson, R. (2002). The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment. *Urban Review*, 34, 317-342.
- Skiba, R. J., Poloni-Staudinger, L., Simmons, A. B., Feggins-Azziz, R., & Chung, C. G. (2005). Unproven links: Can poverty explain ethnic disproportionality in special education? *Journal of Special Education*, 39, 130-144.
- Sleeter, C. E. (1995). An analysis of critiques of multicultural education. In J. A. Banks & C. A. McGee Banks (Eds.), *Handbook on research on multicultural education* (pp. 81-94). New York: Simon & Schuster Macmillan.
- Utley, C. A., Kozleski, E., Smith, A., & Draper, I. (2002). A proactive strategy for minimizing behavior problems in urban youth. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 4(4), 196-207.
- Utley, C., & Obiakor, F. E. (2001). *Special education, multicultural education, and school reform: Components of quality education for learners with mild disabilities*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.
- Villegas, A. M., & Lucas, T. (2002). *Educating culturally responsive teachers: A coherent approach*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

- Weinstein, C., Curran, M., & Tomlinson-Clarke, S. (2003). Culturally responsive classroom management: Awareness into action. *Theory into Practice*, 42(4), 269-274.
- Williams, G. L., & Obiakor, F. E. (2009). *The state of education of urban learners and possible solutions: The Milwaukee experience*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.
- Yost, D. S. (2006). *Reflection and self-efficacy: Enhancing the retention of qualified teachers from a teacher education perspective*. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, 33(4), 59-76.
- Zumwalt, K., & Craig, E. (2005). Teachers' characteristics: Research on the demographic profile. In M. Cochran-Smith & K. M. Zeichner (Eds.), *Studying teacher education: The report of the AERA panel on research and teacher education* (pp. 111-156). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

#### AUTHORS NOTE

**Cheryl A. Utley, Ph.D.**, is the lead consultant of the Research, Education, and Policy Consultant Firm. Her research interests include multicultural education, intervention research with general and special educators, response-to-intervention and positive behavior support strategies with culturally and linguistically diverse students with and without mild disabilities. She has authored books and numerous articles on infusing multicultural education into special education. She is the former co-editor of the journal entitled *Multiple Voices for Ethnically Diverse Exceptional Learners*. Correspondence concerning this paper may be sent to Cheryl@ku.edu.

**Festus E. Obiakor, Ph.D.**, is a Professor in the Department of Exceptional Education at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His research interests include self-concept development, multicultural psychology and special education, and educational reform and innovation. He is a renowned scholar with more than 150 publications, including books and journal articles. He serves on the editorial board of many refereed journals, including *Multicultural Learning and Teaching (MLT)* in which he currently serves as co-executive editor. Correspondence concerning this paper may be sent to fobiakor@uwm.edu.

**Jeffrey P. Bakken, Ph.D.**, is Professor and Chair, Department of Special Education at Illinois State University. His specific areas of interest include transition, teacher effectiveness, assessment, learning strategies, and technology. He has written more than 100 academic publications, including books, journal articles, chapters, monographs, reports, and proceedings. Correspondence concerning this paper may be sent to jpbakke@ilstu.edu.

Copyright of Learning Disabilities -- A Contemporary Journal is the property of Learning Disabilities Worldwide and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.