

Halifax Regional School Board Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Purpose

To provide the Governing Board with an overview of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and its implementation within schools.

Background

On December 7, 2016 at a Leadership Session, the Governing Board requested that a presentation be given on Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and how it is being implemented within schools in the Halifax Regional School Board (HRSB).

The process towards implementing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy has been an evolution in the HRSB's commitment to student achievement.

HRSB's Governing Board approved the report 2016-06-24, the Draft Business Plan and Budgets for 2016-2017 and the mandate "To achieve equitable learning opportunities for all students". This document speaks to the significance of implementing culturally responsive pedagogy and identifies the following priorities:

- *Build on administrators' existing knowledge and experience through additional professional learning opportunities that will advance their ability to lead with a culturally responsive approach.*
- *Enhance the capacity of teachers to deliver culturally responsive instruction and assessment practices to improve student achievement through targeted professional development.*

Throughout 2016-2017, the HRSB continues to engage in a strategic plan to provide culturally relevant pedagogy to all 136 schools as one of several targeted approaches to achieving equitable learning outcomes for all students.

Content

What is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) was first conceptualized by Gloria Ladson-Billings following her investigation of successful teachers of African American students. Using an ethnographical approach, Ladson-Billings explored the behaviours of teachers who excelled at producing successfully achieving learners. The finding of her study revealed that learners were successful when teachers:

- expected student achievement and designed learning experiences accordingly
- encouraged and supported students in developing and maintaining cultural competence
- assisted students in developing a critical consciousness towards school and society

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy is therefore, a theoretical framework that "not only addresses student achievement but also helps students to accept and affirm their cultural identity while developing critical perspectives that challenge inequalities that schools (and other institutions) perpetuate", 1995, p.469.)

Why is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy significant to the Halifax Regional School Board's Business Plan?

Ladson-Billings' research is significant to the Halifax Regional School Board's Business Plan and Budgets 2016-2017 goal of achieving "equitable learning opportunities for all students" for several notable reasons.

First, Ladson-Billings' scholarship interrogates the status quo justification of underachievement by effectively contending that school failure is not an inherent characteristic of learners but rather symptomatic of deficit belief systems, systemic educational processes and pedagogy. Secondly, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy further interrogates notions that the cultures of children of African ancestry and others from non-dominant locations are antithetical to the project of student achievement. In contrast, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy unwaveringly asserts that teaching must invest in affirming and embedding the experiences of learners as official knowledges in the pursuit of achievement.

Thirdly, by making visible the central causes of underachievement, Ladson-Billings also concurrently illuminates a pathway for consistently producing more equitable outcomes for all learners. More specifically, by intentionally providing learning opportunities to deconstruct belief systems and engage in strategic discussions around how one's work intersects with culturally relevant practice, those working within education are better positioned to proactively impact student achievement and learning. Lastly, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy expands student achievement beyond the structures of schooling to encompass the wider socio-political realities. Successful teaching recognizes that schools exist within the broader context of society and consequently encourages students to be deliberate in their ability to question and critique the inequities existing within education and society.

How is HRSB implementing Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?

The journey towards a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy has been a process that has been fueled by a continued focus on student achievement. In previous years there was a concerted effort towards ensuring the availability of resources, the hiring of personnel from diverse ethnicities and the inclusion of cultural experiences that were representative of the student population. There has also been a focus on *cultural proficiency* whereby organizational members were provided with professional development around understanding their own value systems and how such knowledge may be used to promote organizational transformation and change. Beginning in 2014, the HRSB embraced cultural responsiveness as the process to further enact and inspire systemic change for learners. *Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* uses "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 them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students (Gay, 2011, p.31). Within a culturally responsive approach educators are viewed as cultural translators and act as conduits between learning outcomes and students' knowledges and lived experiences. Students are viewed as knowledge bearers and critically active participants to the learning process. Beyond the curriculum, teachers are deliberate in their attentiveness to the learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, and classroom management and performance assessments.

Extensive work has been undertaken within HRSB on culturally responsive pedagogy since its implementation in 2014 under the leadership of Ms. Wendy Mackey, Senior Diversity Advisor. School Administrators and central office staff received additional support from Dr. Kim McLeod around messaging & culturally responsive practice. Professional Development sessions were also organized by an interdisciplinary team comprised of School Administration, Program, and HRSB's School Improvement Leadership Team. Sessions focused on providing participants with a historical perspective on African Nova Scotian education, belief systems, leadership styles and systemic racism. Priority School staff members from six schools were provided with additional support along with student services specialists (speech-language pathologists, schools psychologists, social workers and guidance counsellors) and School Administration Supervisors.

Throughout 2015-2016, the Halifax Regional School Board continued to prioritize improving student achievement for African Nova Scotian and First Nations students. Departments collaborated to critique and explore the intersections across practice and it is during this time period that the conception of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy was embraced as a system's perspective. Staff from sixteen schools were provided with

professional development support focused on facilitating improved achievement for students of African and Mi'kmaq/Aboriginal ancestry. Sessions emphasized the core tenets of:

- Challenging belief systems
- Developing high expectations
- Understanding learning styles
- Creating culturally relevant lesson plans

Focused effort was also directed towards enhancing administrators' existing knowledge and competency in leading from within a Culturally Relevant framework. Likewise, professional development sessions with teachers and support staff remained focused on enhancing practice.

This year Culturally Relevant Pedagogy remains a continued focus within the HRSB. The Diversity Team now includes two Culturally Relevant Specialists. These educational specialists work directly with school based administrators and teachers to support the board-wide priority of improving academic achievement for African Nova Scotian and students of Mi'kmaq Aboriginal ancestry.

School-base administrators also identified specific goals for follow-up support. Collated information resulted in staff research to develop two subsequent professional development modules:

- Belief Systems and High Expectations
- Culturally Relevant Assessment and Authentic Assessment

Three video segments have been produced in conjunction with the HRSB Communications Office. These videos provide practical information and strategies for teachers and administrators around implementing culturally relevant pedagogy within classroom, through a Mi'kmaq/Aboriginal lens and in support of newcomers.

During the last quarter the Diversity Team provided 249 classroom teachers with professional development in Culturally Relevant Pedagogy with twenty-nine of the proposed 34 schools having received Culturally Relevant Pedagogy to date. An online resource site has been developed to house professional development resources in support of educational leadership, teaching and learning and will be made available during the next quarter. Additionally, a draft guide has been created to assist central office and school-based staff in operationalizing Culturally Relevant Practice.

Funding Details

N/A - Within existing budget.

Timeline

N/A

Appendices

Appendix A: PowerPoint Slides

Recommendations

That the Governing Board accepts this report for information.

Communications

AUDIENCE	RESPONSIBLE	TIMELINE
Regular Board Meeting	Marlene Ruck Simmonds	February 22, 2017

Contact

For further information, please contact Dr. Marlene Ruck Simmonds, Acting Senior Diversity Advisor at mrucksimmonds@hrsb.ca or 464-2000 ext. 2006

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Presentation for Governing Board

February 22, 2017

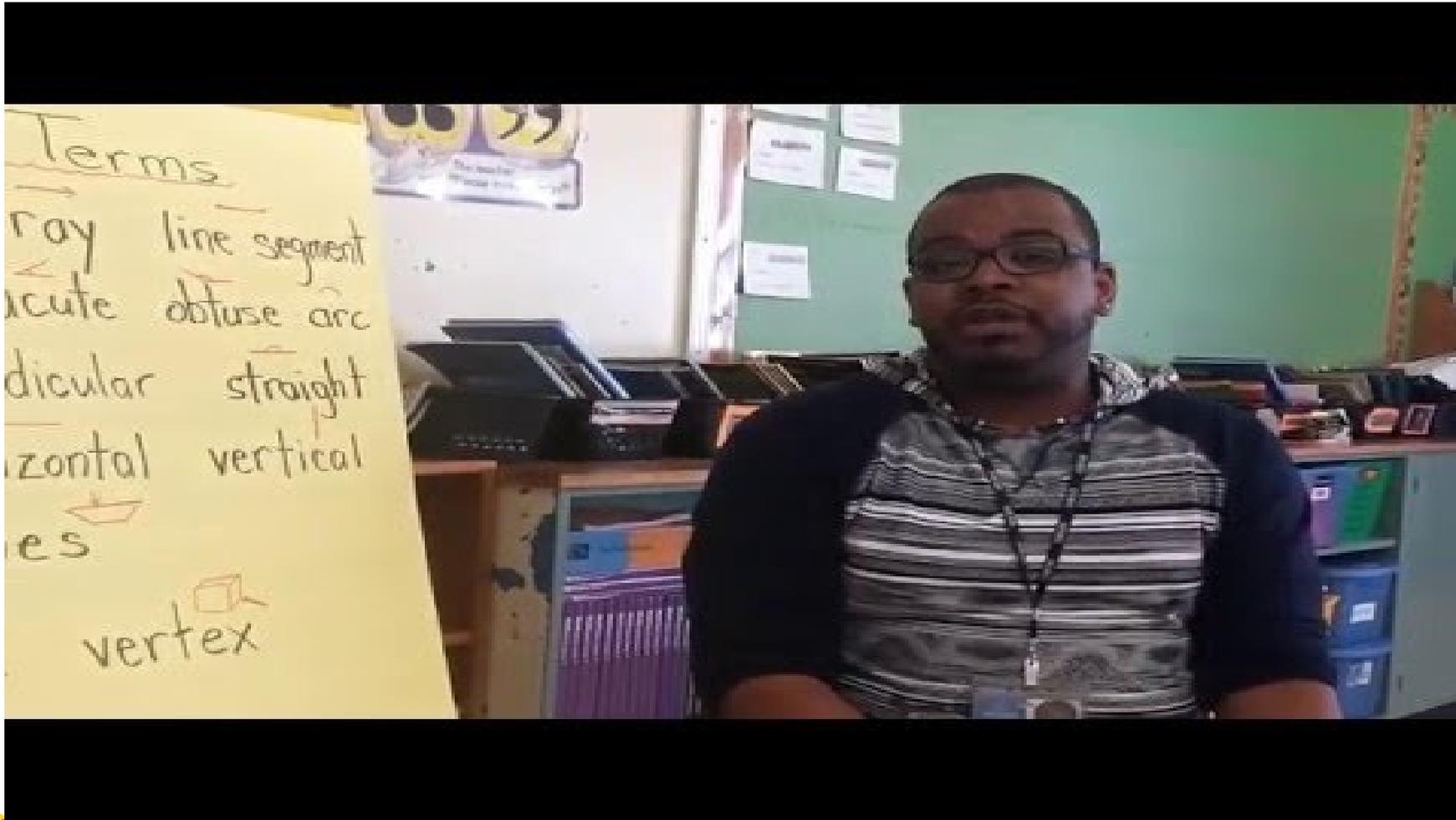
What is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy?

- Conceptualized by Dr. Gloria Ladson-Billings
- Based on research exploring the behaviours and practices of successful teachers of African American students
- Provides a theoretical and pedagogical framework for promoting and sustaining student achievement

What are the Core Components?

- 1). Student achievement must be expected and experienced
- 2). Students must be encouraged to develop and maintain cultural competence
- 3). Educational practices must enable students to develop a critical consciousness towards the inequities in community and society

What Does it Look Like?



Why is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy significant to HRSB's Priorities?

- We will improve the academic achievement results of our African Nova Scotian students and Mi'kmaq/Aboriginal students
- We will improve the academic achievement results in our priority schools

How will CRP shape professional practice?



How is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy being implemented within HRSB?

YEAR	Professional Development
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All principals and vice principals• Student Services staff (guidance counsellors, speech language pathologists, social workers, psychologists)• All School staff from 6 schools• School Administration Supervisors

YEAR	Professional Development
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 700+ teachers participated in professional learning around CRP and achievement data• Staff from 16 additional schools received professional learning on culturally relevant instructional and assessment practices• All principals participated in sessions around leading from within a culturally relevant framework• Additional support to Human Resources staff, School Administration, and Student Services• Further support to 6 former schools

Business Plan Goals for 2016-2017

“To Achieve Equitable Outcomes for All students”

- *Build on administrators’ existing knowledge and experience through additional professional learning opportunities that will advance their ability to lead with a culturally responsive approach.*
- *Enhance the capacity of teachers to deliver culturally responsive instruction and assessment practices to improve student achievement through targeted professional development.*

YEAR	OVERVIEW OF IMPLEMENTATION
2016	2 Culturally Relevant Specialists
	249 classroom teachers from 29 schools received PD
	Leadership Development Program candidates
	Literacy Support Teachers, Math & Literacy Coaches
	Professional support for Administrators
Upcoming	Online resource site
	Culturally Relevant Administrative Guide
	Administrative Mentorship Group
	Student Support Workers professional development



Thank You