Overview:

Culturally responsive teaching practices in schools and classrooms have been shown to be an effective means of addressing the achievement gap, as well as the disproportionate representation of racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students in programs serving students with special needs. While there has been a recent influx in research discussing these issues, teachers and school staff lack clear examples and tools for best practices that will aid them in addressing the achievement gap and disproportionality effectively within their schools. Presented here is a Guide for Schools and Teachers Toward Culturally Responsive Practice (Griner, 2011) that was developed through an extensive review of the literature, an expert review with representative parents, school personnel, and community leaders, and a Delphi Study with researchers in the field of Culturally Responsive Teaching and research.

- Rationale for the CRT Tool:
  - Designed to be instructive
  - Intended to be a fluid document involving people at various levels within the school system
  - Intended to promote a way of thinking, as well as a means of practice.
  - A critical curriculum reform rationale should be adopted that recognizes inequitable power structures that privilege certain voices over others.
  - Promotes a stance of inquiry
  - Caution against the use of the CRT tool as a “quick fix” approach
  - Intended to empower the school community to enact changes addressing the specific needs of their student population
  - Intended purpose to help educators engage in reflective practice.
  - Not to be used as an evaluative punitive measure
  - Though the tool is a practical, succinct, user-friendly means to introduce participants to culturally responsive strategies, the instrument should also be considered as a means of revealing deeper issues that may be addressed at each school site.
  - Once those deeper issues are identified, more professional development and mediated experiences will need to be facilitated to address issues of power, race, culture, language, ethnicity in creating a more equitable educational experience for our students and their families (Seidl & Pugach, 2009).

Rationale:

IDEA 2004 requires that states monitor whether or not significant disproportionality based on race or ethnicity is occurring in a district and requires that districts found to have significant disproportionality must conduct a state review of policies and practices, publicly report related findings, and finally districts must reserve 15 percent of IDEA funds for coordinated early intervening services (CEIS) (Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services, 2009). At the state level, many states have adopted a 3-tiered intervention model to address the needs of racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students at the general education level before inappropriate placement can happen. The National Education Association (NEA, 2010) has declared that addressing the issue of disproportionality is an important part of the efforts of state and local initiatives toward addressing the differences in achievement of students from RCELD backgrounds. The three tiers of Response to Intervention
provide opportunities for both general and special education teachers to move beyond traditionally isolated roles, to full collaboration in efforts to appropriately identify students for placement in special education programs. Reschly (2009) reports the inappropriate placement of RCELD students in special education programs largely depends on what occurs at tiers one and two in the RTI model. The goal is to identify problems and implement sustained, effective interventions, before they become “too severe and difficult to resolve,” (p. 15)

The IDEA funds allotted to coordinated early intervention services (CEIS), is one step toward addressing this issue. Klinger et al. (2005) argues that these resources be allocated towards implementing culturally responsive educational systems in order to effect practice that would lead to a narrowing of the achievement gap and lower the incidences of inappropriate placement of RCELD students in special education programs (OSE-EIS, 2009). Response to Intervention (RTI) is a 3-tiered intervention model that aligns with many of the key tenets of CRT. Response to Intervention (RTI) presents a systematic model for addressing the individual needs of students, based on formative and summative assessment data, with a focus on outcomes to provide high quality instruction and intervention effectively and efficiently (Hosp, 2008).

Contact:

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For further information and permission to use this resource.

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## A Culturally Responsive Teaching Checklist for Schools and Teachers

### 2. Introduction

This checklist of strategies for culturally responsive teaching was compiled from a review of research in the field, as well as suggestions from expert researchers, teacher educators, administrators, teachers, and parents and community members representing students from diverse backgrounds.

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE CHECKLIST:** For each statement below, please do the following: (1) select your level of agreement, (2) select any of the quality indicators listed under each statement that you use or have seen in practice at your school, (3) use the quality indicators to guide you in selecting your response to each statement.

Note: To be as inclusive as possible, references to families within this checklist may refer to biological parents, step-parents, adoptive or foster parents, legal guardians, other family members such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc. and to social family members.

**RCELD Students:** This acronym refers to students who are racially, culturally, ethnically, and linguistically diverse (RCELD). This term is used to describe RCELD students, but also includes students that come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, that have experienced sustained school failure over time.
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3.

1. My school has a set of guiding principles in place related to addressing the needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
   - [ ] strongly agree
   - [ ] agree
   - [ ] neutral
   - [ ] disagree
   - [ ] strongly disagree

2. Place a check by any of the quality indicators below that you have used or have seen in practice at your school.
   - [ ] A significant amount of discussion, professional development, and resources have been designated for these issues on a regular basis
   - [ ] Resources are provided for staff to develop curricula that fosters an appreciation and deep understanding of diversity
   - [ ] School staff participate in on-going staff development related to diversity issues, including opportunities for teachers to share and reflect on their own cultural beliefs and biases, opportunities for teachers and staff to become knowledgeable about the various RCELD populations and resources in the surrounding community
   - [ ] ESL, special and general education teachers receive common professional development
   - [ ] Professional development support is provided to assist all staff in meeting the ongoing needs of RCELD students
     - [ ] Other (please specify):

3. The school staff works collaboratively to support all students.
   - [ ] strongly agree
   - [ ] agree
   - [ ] neutral
   - [ ] disagree
   - [ ] strongly disagree
### A Culturally Responsive Teaching Checklist for Schools and Teachers

1. **Place a check by any of the quality indicators below that you have used or have seen in practice at your school.**

   - There is extensive and effective collaborative interaction between general education teachers, special education teachers, and other support staff, which includes regular co-planning, co-teaching, and discussions regarding specific staff and teacher roles and responsibilities, with a focus on meeting the needs of RCELD students.
   - Master schedules allow maximum time for shared planning and teaching amongst general and special education teachers and other instructional support staff.
   - Peer support mentors are provided for instructional team members as needed.
   - Co-planning and co-teaching occur regularly with a focus on meeting the needs of all students.
   - Special education teachers and general education teachers, as well as other instructional support staff participate collaboratively in ongoing analysis of the effectiveness of instruction, particularly with RCELD students.
   - Parent, parent liaison, teachers and community centers work together.
   - Regular and special education teachers share the same expectations for students regardless of ability.

2. **Other (please specify):**

### 5. The school staff establishes strong home/school connections by making concerted efforts to reach out to parents/family members of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds by fostering collaboration, mutual trust, and respect.

   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - neutral
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree
# A Culturally Responsive Teaching Checklist for Schools and Teachers

6. Please select any of the quality indicators below that you use or have seen used at your school:

- School hosts events for parents/families of RCELD students on a regular basis (e.g., potluck meals, parent groups).
- School provides opportunities for parents/family members of RCELD students to participate in regularly scheduled meetings outside the school setting (e.g., at community centers, through flexible scheduling, consideration of transportation needs).
- Multiple attempts are made to involve parents/family members.
- School administration promotes staff knowledge of diverse cultures (i.e., through professional development, partnership with local colleges for participation in course work related to cultural equity, etc.).
- Problem-solving teams include parents/family members of RCELD students in meeting discussions to formulate instructional and behavioral recommendations.
- Staff members offer to meet with parents outside the school setting (e.g., home visits or community sites).
- Staff develops relationships with surrounding RCELD communities to assist the school with translation, cultural interpretation, and other needs and also to elicit services appropriate to student needs.
- Parents are encouraged to help their children maintain their native language while learning English.
- Printed materials (bulletin boards, school publications, etc.) are available in home languages of all children in the school.
- Home visits/regular phone calls are encouraged to gain insight into students' lives and support systems, as well as to garner parent/family member input in the decision making process.
- Parents/families/community members are invited regularly into classrooms.
- School staff regularly reach out to families of RCELD students by involving them in school meetings and problem solving discussions.
- School staff actively seek the involvement and decision making input of families of RCELD students and are committed to learning about the culture of those families and empowering them to become an active participant in the school and their child's education.
- School staff makes continuous contact over summer (phone calls, postcards).
- School staff celebrate special events in students' lives (birthdays, out of school accomplishments).
- School staff provides voice mails in native languages of who may not be literate in their first language.
- School staff makes attempts to understand what's important to families during holidays.
- School staff makes positive contacts with parents first, before problems arise.
- School staff encourages and provides a space for parent support groups to help parents from RCELD backgrounds become more involved.
- Professional development allows time for teachers to get to know the communities of their students.

Other (please specify)
A Culturally Responsive Teaching Checklist for Schools and Teachers

7. The school staff views students from culturally and linguistically diverse students and their families as assets.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - neutral
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree

8. Place a check by any quality indicators that you have seen used at your school:
   - There is clear evidence that RCELD students and their families are viewed as assets. Parents, families, and community members from RCELD backgrounds are invited regularly to share in school processes and to share their knowledge, expertise, and experiences with school staff and students.
   - Staff share realistic and high expectations for RCELD student achievement and behavior.
   - All students, including RCELD students, are regularly recognized and honored for their work.
   - School organizations, committees, clubs, and activities reflect the ethnic makeup of the student population.
   - Bilingual programming is used to support ESL students
   - School materials translated for non-English speaking families (or translators provided for voice mails and in person meetings).
   - School staff take opportunities to become knowledgeable about the various RCELD populations and resources in the surrounding community.
   - School staff celebrates students' successes regularly
   - See suggestions from question 3 as well.

   Other (please specify)

9. The school staff incorporates culturally responsive materials and content in the curricula and use culturally responsive teaching practices.
   - strongly agree
   - agree
   - neutral
   - disagree
   - strongly disagree
# A Culturally Responsive Teaching Checklist for Schools and Teachers

10. Place a check by any of the quality indicators below that you have used or have seen in practice at your school.

- [ ] School staff regularly incorporates culturally responsive materials, content, and teaching practices. School staff constantly seek to add to their knowledge of culturally responsive practices and there is ongoing review of the effectiveness of staff practices on RCELD student learning.

- [ ] School staff validates students’ cultural identities in classroom practices (understands and integrates students’ family makeup, immigration history and experiences, individual concerns, strengths, talents and interests into the curriculum; utilizes students’ native language resources).

- [ ] All students are educated about diversity.

- [ ] School staff promotes equity and mutual respect among students.

- [ ] Students are motivated to become active participants in their learning; encouraged to think critically, strive for excellence, and become socially and politically conscious (i.e. identifies and extinguishes myths about other cultures).

- [ ] School staff seeks to understand students’ prior knowledge and experience with specific subject areas and topics in the curriculum.

- [ ] School staff shows interest and encouragement of students’ native language through use of some vocabulary to better communicate with students.

- [ ] Teachers regularly explain how/why students’ responses are correct/incorrect; (Timely feedback for error corrections and positive reinforcement).

- [ ] School environment contains regular evidence of contributions/work from individuals with diverse backgrounds, rather than just during a special week or month.

- [ ] A variety of scaffolding techniques are used to enhance instruction.

- [ ] Classroom materials include stories and perspectives from diverse cultures, as well as materials provided in native language represented in the classroom.

- [ ] Classroom instruction is varied (e.g., small group, cooperative learning high teacher-student interaction)

- [ ] High energy and animation in the classroom, real world relevant learning activities, increased teacher-student interactions.

- [ ] Students’ differences as well as their commonalities are acknowledged.

- [ ] Homework assignments are adapted to specific needs of RCELD students.

- [ ] Teachers exhibit instructional use of multiple intelligences & various learning styles.

- [ ] Teachers use appropriate technology integration within the classroom.

- [ ] RCELD students receive additional review and practice in difficulty areas.

- [ ] Direct, frequent, and continuous monitoring of RCELD student progress and instruction occurs.

- [ ] Differentiated instruction to address specific needs of RCELD students is used regularly.
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11. The school staff uses culturally responsive behavior management practices by considering the impact of culture on the school performance of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

- [ ] strongly agree
- [ ] agree
- [ ] neutral
- [ ] disagree
- [ ] strongly disagree
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Culturally Responsive Teaching Checklist for Schools and Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12. Place a check by any quality indicators that you have used or seen in practice at your school:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ School staff discuss student’s culture and conducts systematic analysis of its impact on school performance. The systematic analysis of the student’s culture and potential impact on behavior include staff discussions with the family about home expectations and behavior management practices and staff self-assessments of their own cultural expectations and practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Classroom rules and procedures are accommodating to diverse student learning styles (all students are actively involved in instruction and other classroom activities to the extent possible; understanding of types of knowledge valued by students’ parents/families).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Individualized behavior supports to address the needs of RCELD students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Classroom examples of understanding behavioral differences of RCELD students (e.g., expressed preference for working individually or in groups, seating arrangements balanced by ethnicity and gender, listening and responding style, peer interaction patterns, responses to authority, verbal and nonverbal communication, turn taking behaviors).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Individualized behavior plans are created as appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ When necessary, RCELD students in classrooms have behavioral management systems that address individual cultural differences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Staff confer with family about home expectations, values, customs, and behavior management practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Staff engage in self-assessments of their own cultural expectations and practices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ General education classroom instructional groupings promote heterogeneous groups of students working together.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Teachers implement flexible groupings of students for different purposes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Efforts are made to create positive learning environment where there is a community of learners that assist and collaborate with one another (i.e., time devoted to social skills instruction and problem solving skills).</td>
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<tr>
<td>□ Classrooms promote conversational interactions between students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ The use of Reading buddies, Cooperative learning groups,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Cross age peer tutoring, and peer teaching is used where limited-English-proficient students can participate and practice English-language skills in small groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ The Instructional Team regularly uses peer supports in classrooms and continuously seeks to empower students to take a more active responsibility for their learning and supporting each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ School has established procedures that emphasize positive behaviors and regularly recognizes students for displaying appropriate behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ School staff have been trained in the implementation of a positive behavioral support system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Classroom incentive plans for positive behavior are have been implemented.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ Administration provides resources for evidence-based social skills instruction.</td>
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<tr>
<td>A Culturally Responsive Teaching Checklist for Schools and Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Issues of intolerance are dealt with immediately according to the school's anti-harassment policies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Classroom time is devoted to social skills instruction and problem solving skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The school has implemented a positive behavioral support system for all students, staff have been trained in its use, and school staff regularly discuss the effectiveness of school-wide positive behavioral support interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Classroom procedures and routines are actively taught to students with periodic reminders and implemented consistently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Classroom transitions are short and smooth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Teacher-student interactions are positive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Alternatives to school suspension are in place and regularly considered.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other (please specify)  

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13. The school staff uses data from these multiple sources drive instructional decisions: formal and informal assessments, observations, analysis of data from previous school years, ongoing progress monitoring data, information from family about students' home and family culture, language, and social history to drive instructional decisions.

- strongly agree  
- agree  
- neutral  
- disagree  
- strongly disagree
### A Culturally Responsive Teaching Checklist for Schools and Teachers

14. Place a check by the quality indicators that you have used or seen in practice at your school:

- [ ] School staff have implemented a systematic, problem solving process that includes all of the above sources to drive instructional decisions.
- [ ] Academic expectations for individual students are based on multiple data sources and individual ability rather than broad-based assumptions.
- [ ] Staff encourage high rate of observable, measurable student responses.
- [ ] Problem-solving teams are active and engaged in problem solving discussions on a regular basis.
- [ ] Student progress-monitoring data is used to track performance and evaluate school practices.
- [ ] Examples of problem-solving teams implemented interventions with data on targeted behavior(s) of a RCEL student for a reasonable amount of time.
- [ ] Problem-solving teams provide follow-up support and monitoring of planned interventions.
- [ ] Multiple data sources are used to evaluate student learning: i.e. standardized tests, informal assessments, observations, verbal and written assessments, assessment data from years prior.
- [ ] Families encouraged to participate in problem solving discussions to include information about students home and family culture, language, and social history.
- [ ] Data from general education classroom interventions designed to provide academic and/ or behavioral support to a RCEL student.
- [ ] Classroom examples of informal, curriculum-based, authentic assessments on academic performance of RCEL students are regularly used.
- [ ] The instructional team considers working with other agencies is needed, such as mental health clinics for professional development and partnership on mental health issues that may be affecting student performance.

Other (please specify)

15. The school staff actively seeks to identify other possible explanations for RCEL students’ behavior or learning difficulties rather than automatically assuming student deficit or disability? Reasons such as: family mobility, insufficient instruction, limited English proficiency, family risk factors, or cultural differences between school and home expectations, home/school communication barriers, and/or students’ access to resources?

- [ ] strongly agree
- [ ] agree
- [ ] neutral
- [ ] disagree
- [ ] strongly disagree
### A Culturally Responsive Teaching Checklist for Schools and Teachers

1. Place a check by any quality indicators that you have used or seen in practice at your school:

   - School staff have implemented a problem-solving process that includes a thorough analysis of student's home and instructional environment and an extensive array of classroom interventions are implemented prior to special education referral, possible retention, or other academic or disciplinary decisions.
   - School and classroom environmental assessment is conducted to determine possible explanations for the problems experienced by the RCELd student.
   - There is regular, systematic use of curriculum-based assessment and error analyses data.
   - Problem-solving teams' recommendations focus on positive behavioral interventions & student strengths.
   - Delineated and comprehensive referral process is in place.
   - If applicable, the instructional team discusses a RCELd student and his/her excessive school absence or past history of mobility.
   - The instructional team reviews and discusses number of excused, unexcused absences, truancies, and tardiness and its effect of students' learning, behavior, or other difficulties.
   - Strategies to increase attendance have been documented.
   - Student and family support from school staff for attendance issues.
   - Home visits occur often.
   - Excessive absences or family mobility are discussed by the Instructional Team with detailed and indepth analysis of the impact on the continuity of general education classroom instruction for the RCELd student, and recommendations on how to minimize the instructional impact in the future.
   - Additional, culture-specific assistance is sought to provide appropriate instruction before referring RCELd students to next tier of intervention.
   - Life stressors are assessed (i.e., divorce, death of a family member).
   - Team discusses family risk factors (i.e., exposure to toxic substances or violence/abuse) and the effect on students' learning, behavior, or other difficulties.
   - Team discusses environmental, social, economic, and cultural factors to be considered.
   - Issues of insufficient instruction are explored, (i.e., review of previous interruptions of instruction in prior classes).
   - Students' parents/family have an equal voice in problem-solving and decision making to determine reasons for students' learning, behavior, or other difficulties.
   - Analysis of problem behaviors are regularly conducted to assess RCELd students.
   - Informal, curriculum-based, authentic assessments on academic performance of RCELd students is regularly used in the classroom.
   - Parents are consulted to gain a better understanding of parent expectations for the student.
   - Mentoring programs have been implemented school-wide.
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☐ There are consistent discipline expectations for all students.

Other (please specify)

17. Are there any specific quality indicators that you plan to implement in your school or classroom? If yes, which ones?

18. Create a 3-5 step action plan outline for implementing one or more of the quality indicators you plan on implementing from the above question.