

Preface

Six years after the publication of *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You: Culturally Relevant Teaching Strategies* (2006), I am at it again, writing my teaching life. I have had the good fortune to continue to work with educators across the country during these years and have learned and grown through the work. These educators work in urban schools, suburban schools, and rural areas, and I support them through ongoing workshops, observations, coaching, e-mails, and phone conversations. After working three to five years in several districts with scores of different teachers, I can document their progress from isolation to collaboration, including their use of culturally responsive strategies, peer observation, and professional learning groups. As a result, I realized I needed to write a new edition of this book to update the research in the field and give you access to the latest and best I have learned.

WHAT IS NEW?

This new edition contains the following new material:

- Updated research on culturally diverse learners
- Updated research on classroom instruction
- Common Core State Standards
- How to teach English language learners
- How to teach Latino/a/Hispanic learners
- How to teach new immigrant learners
- A chapter examining what race is and is not
- Suggestions for using technology and PD 360 alignment
- New engagement strategies for culturally diverse learners
- New lessons created by teachers using them in their classrooms today
- Additional student support models
- A wellness chapter for you, the teacher!

The book contains a wealth of new material, research, strategies, narratives, and lesson plans to be both a resource for you and a companion on a journey as we travel together in our quest to become more culturally responsive in our instruction.

WHAT IS STILL THE SAME?

I am *still* an older White female who can only share with you what “I know I know” at this time in my journey to understand culture, race, class, gender, and students who don’t look like me. I can’t write this book with the understanding or life experiences of a Person of Color or a young student in today’s world. I will never know or understand their experiences. I consider myself an antiracist, yet I must remember, “even antiracist educators reproduce a racialized social system” (M. Pollock, 2008, p. 348). I have no other choice; I am part of the system. To continue this work, I pledge to do my best and work within this unequal system to try and change it. This book is my attempt to do that, but it is only what *I know I know* at this time in my journey.

Another thing that is still the same is the focus on African American students. African American children were the students I taught who did not look like me and the students I wrote about in my first book, *African American Academic Achievement: Building a Classroom of Excellence*, which I self-published in 2001. When I wrote *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You*, I incorporated most of the self-published book within the body of the new book. As a result, even though this book contains no chapter dedicated solely to African American students, they are still a majority focus, and examples of African American student experiences are woven throughout the book. In addition, much of the earlier book is retained, based on the feedback from thousands of educators who have used it as a learning journey.

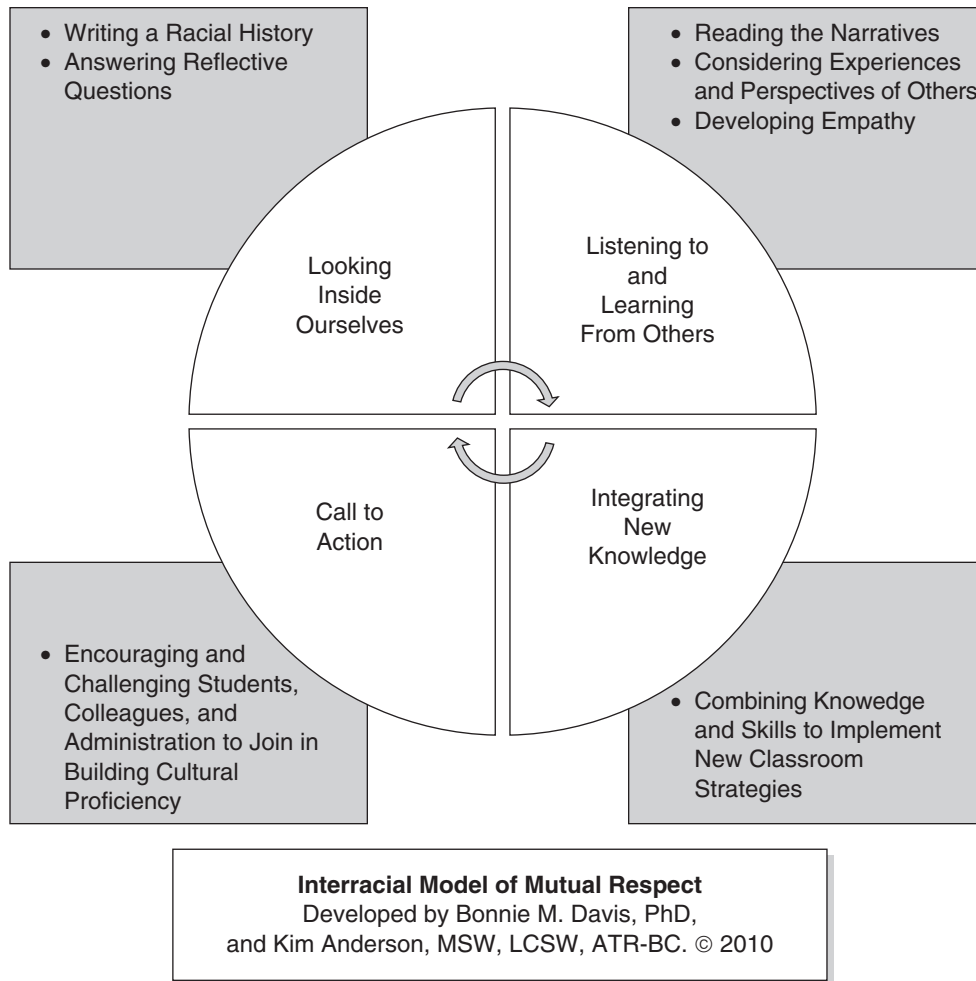
THE JOURNEY FRAMEWORK

Feeling the need to conceptualize this learning journey within a framework, I was fortunate to work with Kim Anderson, a licensed clinical social worker and expressive arts psychotherapist, to create a model for us to use as we tackle the challenge of becoming culturally responsive to the diverse learners in our schools. This model, cultural consideration and equity skill building, has evolved over time in three additional books: *The Biracial and Multiracial Student Experience: A Journey to Racial Literacy* (Davis, 2009); *Culturally Considerate School Counseling: Helping Without Bias* (Anderson, 2010); and *Creating Culturally Considerate Schools: Educating Without Bias* (Anderson & Davis, 2012). In this book, however, we return to the most direct model to begin our journey.

This framework is a simple flowchart of four steps:

- Looking inside ourselves
- Listening to and learning from others
- Integrating new knowledge
- A call to action

We name this journey a journey of *cultural consideration* because we believe that cultural consideration supports the inclusion of all aspects of culture while stemming from the basic principle of respect. This term also differentiates our work from others in the field. At the same time, we respect, acknowledge,



and cite in this book those pioneers and current thinkers in the fields of social justice, diversity, and cultural responsiveness.

EQUITY 101

In addition to the work with cultural consideration, I worked with Curtis Linton, coauthor of *Courageous Conversations About Race* (Singleton & Linton, 2006), on a series of books titled *Equity 101*. In these books, we explore the issue of equity through the lens of expectations, rigor, relevancy, and relationships. Curtis and I coauthored *Culture and Practice* (Linton & Davis, 2012), two of the books in the series. These books offer an in-depth look at both the culture of your school and the instruction in your classrooms. Aligned with this series, the School Improvement Network offers online videos of teachers through their PD 360 professional development tool. This online tool allows teachers to observe other teachers using culturally responsive strategies in their classrooms. I am one of the teachers in the videos, along with hundreds of others.

This book contains references to these videos, so you may check them out as you read about the strategies in the book (see <http://www.schoolimprovement.com/experts/bonnie-davis>).

CULTURAL CONSIDERATION AND EQUITY SKILL BUILDING

Passionate about the issue of equity, I see this book as one tool for investigating what equity looks like in our classrooms and what strategies we can use to support it daily. For me, these strategies include instructional strategies, cultural strategies, and relationship strategies; therefore, this book focuses on these strategies. With an emphasis on strategies and equity skill building, we use the model of cultural consideration and equity skill building to support our journey in this new edition of *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You*. As you begin this journey, what do you want? Do you

- Search for strategies to engage students and close the achievement and learning gaps?
- Seek to understand the cultural differences of your students?
- Look for ways to build relationships across cultures?

If you are like many teachers, you continue to look for ways to improve your classroom instruction. As a classroom teacher with more than four decades of experience, I, too, was always searching for new strategies, understandings, and lessons to support the changing population of students who yearly entered my classroom.

This book is a result of that search. It is an organic document, one that can continue to grow as you interact with the book and your colleagues.

The chapters take you through the following stages:

- A general recognition of culture and how it shapes the lens through which you and others view the world
- The personal narratives and racial histories of educators
- A discussion of race and its impact on learners
- An examination of research on culturally diverse student cultures
- A discussion of achievement and learning gaps
- How-to strategies for teaching within a Common Core State Standards–based learning environment
- Research-based instructional strategies (K–12) to implement across the disciplines with a focus on literacy
- Several academic and leadership support group models
- Suggestions for owning your own wellness
- A references and resources section
- Alignment with PD 360 online professional development videos and support

You can read the chapters in the above sequence, or you can open the book anywhere and read an individual chapter, much like a book of short

stories tied together by a common theme. You can read and respond in the book, using it as a private book study and a professional development tool. Or you can use it with your professional learning groups and collaborative staff meetings. The chapters are educator friendly and meant to be discussed and responded to informally and honestly. The research, strategies, and culturally considerate classroom lessons found in the book are designed to support and improve the academic achievement of all learners, especially culturally diverse learners.

HOW DID YOU LEARN WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT TEACHING?

How did you learn what you know about teaching? I learned what I know about teaching from men in a prison, women in a homeless shelter, and affluent middle schoolers, as well as high school and college students in suburban, urban, and rural areas. The men taught me that even though the common denominator in our prisons is poverty, it does not equate to a lack of intelligence. Some of the most intelligent and best writers I taught were these men. The women in the homeless shelter taught me that our students must find and share their voices in the classroom, for when we allow students to find their voices, their writing glows. All too often students in our society lack this opportunity, and they sometimes find less productive means of “screaming” who they are. Also, they taught me that our lessons must connect to the lives of our students in order to engage learners and support them in attaining skills for career readiness and college. And scores of middle schoolers from an affluent school district taught me that it was not enough to walk into their classroom with a doctorate in English and more than twenty years of teaching experience at the high school and college levels—these children demanded instruction that challenged and engaged them. No longer could lectures grab and keep their attention. I had to learn what “I didn’t know I didn’t know” about good instruction. I learned from all of my students during the thirty years I spent in the classroom and the fifteen years since I worked with adult educators, and that learning is found in this book. This book focuses on students who may not look like you, may not come from similar backgrounds, and may not approach learning like you. Just as the student populations I have taught have informed my instruction, your students speak to you with their needs (or perhaps they scream at you with their needs). In addition, your life experiences add to your teaching repertoire.

WHO ARE CULTURALLY DIVERSE LEARNERS?

Who are culturally diverse learners? They are the homeless children, the migrant children, and the immigrant children learning English. They are children dealing with gender issues and those with learning disabilities. They are special needs children, as well as children from diverse cultures—students perhaps not previously included or successful in our classrooms. To provide

these learners with culturally responsive instruction, we must build relationships and hold high expectations, provide rigorous content knowledge while making explicit the hidden rules of learning, and teach students how to learn as well as what to learn.

WHO IS THE AUDIENCE FOR THIS BOOK?

You are! This book goes beyond instruction and offers you a special opportunity to dig deep inside yourself. Unlike many excellent books that provide research-based instructional strategies, this one includes a section that focuses on race and privilege and its impact on educators: one Black American female and one White American female, the mother of mixed identity children, and one White American male, the father of Asian children. Reading their stories and discussion of the topic of race gives you a glimpse into the racial complexities of our educational landscape and examines a topic seldom found in educational literature. These chapters are designed not for the timid but for educators ready and willing to examine privilege in our society and continue this personal and professional journey into understanding the impact of race.

Who is the audience for this book?

- First and foremost, this book is for teachers from a teacher. The information and strategies are for preservice teachers, beginning teachers, veteran teachers—all of us.
- Administrators at every level who wish to enhance the knowledge base of their staff and provide opportunities for collegial dialogue and learning.
- Professional development chairs, supervisors, mentors, and coaches whose job it is to encourage teachers and provide culturally responsive materials for them.
- Professional learning communities, whether they be a group of two or 200.
- College and university instructors and their students in preservice and graduate courses in which students need or require information on culturally diverse learners.
- Central office administrators engaged in a districtwide effort to become more culturally responsive and close learning gaps.

SET GOALS FOR YOURSELF

As you read, consider setting goals. For example, you may wish to read this book in order to improve instruction or make your instruction more culturally responsive: your end result may be improved student achievement. Your goal or action plan may include one chapter per week of study with your professional learning group, followed by trying one new strategy and reporting back the following week on its effectiveness. You may even want to include peer observations. Whatever you decide, setting goals tunes our brain to focus on our needs and to filter out the rest.

Alan Blankstein, in *The Answer Is in the Room: How Effective Schools Scale Up Student Success* (2011), reminds us that, yes, the answer is in the room, and the most valuable resource you have is “focused commitment over time” (p. 42). Therefore, you may find repetition in the book; some strategies are repeated in more than one place. This continues to focus and, hopefully, commit you to trying the strategies. Join your professional learning group (or start a new one) and discuss together as you read, study, and reflect your way through the book. I welcome your professional conversation, comments, and suggestions. You may e-mail me at a4achievement@earthlink.net.

Enjoy!