



Research Roundup:  
**Cultural  
Responsiveness**

A selection of recent  
reports on culturally  
responsive strategies  
and their effectiveness

*Compiled by Linda Fitch*



The acceptance and embrace of different cultural backgrounds in classrooms is a powerful factor in helping students thrive. But while culturally responsive practices are considered desirable, little research has been conducted on their effectiveness. In order to advance promising new strategies, educators are continually examining practices in use to determine which strategies support learning in diverse classrooms—and by how much. The following resources comprise some of the latest research on culturally responsive teaching, its implementation, and its outcomes in various settings.

### Arts Education

“Engaging Students With Culturally Responsive Arts Education” reports that schools that embrace the cultures of the kids in their classrooms do a better job of engaging those kids. By inviting a range of indigenous elders, artists, crafters, dancers, and musicians to perform, author James Bequette helped students in a California school understand how the arts can debunk stereotypes and aid in cultural continuance.

Bequette, J. (2016). University of Minnesota, College of Education + Human Development. [cehdvision2020.umn.edu/blog/culturally-responsive-arts-education](http://cehdvision2020.umn.edu/blog/culturally-responsive-arts-education).

### Family Engagement

“Culturally Responsive Family Engagement Practices” says that family engagement can boost student achievement. Educators must reflect upon themselves and their practices and build relationships with families to realize the benefits.

Lavorgna, J. (2016). Education Development Center: Learning and Teaching. [ltd.edc.org/culturally-resp-family-engagement](http://ltd.edc.org/culturally-resp-family-engagement).

### Implementation

“Administering an Educational Program: Implementing Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Instruction in Elementary Schools to Increase

Student Achievement” says that while K–12 classrooms are getting more diverse, educators are still predominantly white. This disequilibrium can result in a lack of achievement among culturally diverse students. Elementary school leaders should develop and administer effective culturally responsive curricula that reach the youngest students to correct underperformance.

Hockaday, M. (2015). *William & Mary Educational Review*, 4(1).

[publish.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1031&context=wmer](http://publish.wm.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1031&context=wmer).

In “Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Guide to Evidence-Based Practices for Teaching All Students Equitably,” author Basha Krasnoff says that change demands that “racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse students have the opportunity to meet their learning challenges with the strength and relevance found in their own cultural frame of reference.” In other words, teachers must understand students’ various cultures, how each culture affects how students learn, and how to create classrooms and instruction that embrace those differences.

Krasnoff, B. (2016). Education Northwest, Region X Equity Assistance Center. [educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/culturally-responsive-teaching-508.pdf](http://educationnorthwest.org/sites/default/files/resources/culturally-responsive-teaching-508.pdf).

The *Urban Review* article “Assessing Perceptions of Culture and Trauma in an Elementary School: Informing a Model for Culturally Responsive Trauma-Informed Schools” reports on a new school-university partnership that’s developing a culturally responsive, trauma-informed approach to help students who have experienced adverse experiences due to systemic racial disparities.

Blitz, L.V., Anderson, E.M., and Saastamoinen, M. (2016). *Urban Review*, 48(4), 520–542. [link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11256-016-0366-9](http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11256-016-0366-9).

In “Culturally Responsive Teaching: An Interview With Zaretta Hammond,” the expert says that culturally responsive teaching means more than just motivating disengaged students; instead, it means establishing a learning partnership based upon trust. Educators can use that trust to get students’ “permission” to push



A caring framework can help teachers get to know students without judgment, believe in their brilliance, and yet hold them accountable.



them into a zone of proximal development that encourages neural development and builds capacity for more rigorous work.

Ferlazzo, L. (2015). *Education Week*. [blogs.edweek.org/teachers/classroom\\_qa\\_with\\_larry\\_ferlazzo/2015/07/culturally\\_responsive\\_teaching\\_an\\_interview\\_with\\_zaretta\\_hammond.html](https://blogs.edweek.org/teachers/classroom_qa_with_larry_ferlazzo/2015/07/culturally_responsive_teaching_an_interview_with_zaretta_hammond.html).

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“Culturally Responsive Special Education Referrals of English Learners in One Rural County School District: Pilot Project” describes one school district’s efforts to improve the referral process for English-language learners (ELLs) in grades K–5. The pilot project’s culturally

responsive referral guide offers promising implications for ELLs in rural school districts.

Hoover, J.J., and Erickson, J. (2017). *Rural Special Education Quarterly*, 34(4), 18–28. [journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/875687051503400403](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/875687051503400403).

### Leadership

“Culturally Responsive School Leadership: A Synthesis of the Literature” reviews the expanding body of work surrounding the concept of making the school environment more responsive to the needs of diverse students. The study examines five promising expressions of culturally responsive school leadership (CRSL) that have helped improve inclusion, equity, advocacy, and social justice in schools.

Khalifa, M.A., Gooden, M.A., and Davis, J.E. (2016). *Review of Educational Research*, 86(4), 1272–1311. [cue.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/images/CRSL.pdf](https://cue.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/images/CRSL.pdf).

### Math

“Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Schema Intervention” looks at the efficacy of a word-problem intervention for ELLs with mathematics difficulty. Combining culturally and linguistically responsive practices with schema instruction, an exploratory study design investigates word-problem instruction for ELLs in a culturally and linguistically diverse public elementary school.

Driver, M.K., and Powell, S.R. (2017). *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 40(1), 41–53. [journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0731948716646730](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0731948716646730).

### Measurement

The *Journal of Teacher Education’s* “Promoting Educators’ Use of Culturally Responsive Practices: A Systematic Review of In-Service Interventions” reviews the existing scientific research into the impact of culturally responsive practices (CRP) currently in place. Only 10 empirical studies of CRP in-service training models have been attempted so far, and most failed to meet standards for efficacy, effectiveness, and dissemination.

Bottiani, J.H., Larson, K.E., Debnam, K.J., Bischoff, C.M., and Bradshaw, C.P. (2017). *Journal of Teacher Education*. [journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022487117722553](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022487117722553).

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“An Examination of the Association Between Observed and Self-Reported Culturally Proficient Teaching Practices” says that determining the



## NEW RESOURCE

Want to know what principals think about cultural responsiveness? Read “The Principal’s Guide to Building Culturally Responsive Schools,” which presents recommendations for four leadership competencies to ensure equity for all students. The report was developed by NAESP’s Diversity Taskforce. [www.naesp.org/cultureguide](http://www.naesp.org/cultureguide)

effectiveness of culturally responsive interventions is the “next step in advancing our understanding of teacher practices that can equitably engage and support learning in diverse classrooms.” Controlled measurement is rare, and self-reported data rates success somewhat higher than objective measures.

Debnam, K.J., Pas, E.T., Bottiani, J., Cash, A.H., and Bradshaw, C.P. (2015). *Psychology in the Schools*, 52(6), 533–548. [onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pits.21845](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pits.21845).

“Operationalizing Culturally Responsive Instruction: Preliminary Findings of CRIOP Research” says that more research supporting the effectiveness of culturally responsive instruction (CRI) in closing achievement gaps is needed. This mixed-methods study of the Culturally Responsive Instruction Observation Protocol (CRIOP) for professional development seeks to determine the relationship between culturally responsive instruction and student achievement in reading and mathematics.

Powell, R., Cantrell, S.C., Malo-Juvera, V., and Correll, P. (2016). *Teachers College Record*, 118(1). [tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=18224](http://tcrecord.org/Content.asp?ContentId=18224).

“Emotionally Supportive Classroom Contexts for Young Latino Children in Rural California” addresses the “Latino paradox”—academic underperformance in a climate of strong socio-emotional support—in a rural school district with many children from low-income Latino families. The study uses quantitative and qualitative data to assess emotional support, analyze its relationship to teacher characteristics, and find out how more supportive teachers interact with students in ways that are responsive to cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Reese, L., Jensen, B., and Ramirez, D. (2014). *The Elementary School Journal*, 114(4), 501–526. [journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.1086/675636](http://journals.uchicago.edu/doi/pdfplus/10.1086/675636).

### Middle Level

“Do No Harm: Strategies for Culturally Relevant Caring in Middle-Level Classrooms From the Community Experiences and Life Histories of Black Middle-Level Teachers” focuses on the careers of four female African-American middle-level teachers, finding that their culturally responsive, “caring” strategies were foundational to success. A caring framework can help teachers get to know students without judgment, believe in their brilliance,

and yet hold them accountable without sugar-coating societal injustices.

Williams, T.M. (2018). *Middle Level Education Online*, 41(6), 1–13. [tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/19404476.2018.1460232?needAccess=true](http://tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/19404476.2018.1460232?needAccess=true).

### Preschool

The *Young Children* article “Culturally Responsive Strategies to Support Young Children With Challenging Behavior” describes five culturally responsive strategies teachers can use to build positive relationships with preschool children and minimize challenging behaviors. The techniques examined can help educators examine implicit biases and teaching practices in early childhood classrooms, especially in classrooms where African-American boys are present.

Price, C.L., and Steed, E.A. (2016). *Young Children*, 71(5). [naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2016/culturally-responsive-strategies](http://naeyc.org/resources/pubs/yc/nov2016/culturally-responsive-strategies).

### References

The U.S. Department of Education’s *Getting It Right: Reference Guides for Registering Students With Non-English Names* offers references to naming practices in 11 languages. Each can help educators become familiar with cultural strictures governing family names, order of names, and where names fit into database fields, as well as guidance on addressing parents politely.

Greenberg Motamedi, J., Jaffery, Z., Hagen, A., and Young Yoon, S. (2017). U.S. Department of Education. [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/newcomers-toolkit/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/newcomers-toolkit/index.html).

Similarly, the DOE’s *Newcomer Tool Kit* is designed to help educators and administrators approach immigrant students in a culturally responsive manner, and the English Learner Tool Kit for State and Local Education Agencies can help meet legal obligations while helping ELLs meet standards for English proficiency, college admission, and career readiness.

National Center for English Language Acquisition (2017). U.S. Department of Education. [www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/newcomers-toolkit/index.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/newcomers-toolkit/index.html) and <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/index.html>.

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