

Building Cultural Competency and Developing a Culturally Responsive Learning Environment: The Role of Educators and School Leaders

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The Education Trust–West

WRCEBC 2010 Conference

Goals & Objectives

- Help you to deconstruct and unlearn the myths around culturally responsive teaching in public education
- Provide you with strategies for implementing culturally responsive teaching among leaders and teachers within your school sites
- Show some of the needed steps for bridging the divide between parents and educators in the push for culturally responsive learning environments

Agenda

- Define culture and review research related to culturally responsive pedagogy
- Discuss practical ways to build cultural competency and implement culturally responsive approaches to teaching and learning school-wide
 - School Leadership
 - Teachers
 - Family and Community Involvement
- Counter the myths around cultural competency and implementing culturally responsive teaching
- Discussion/Questions

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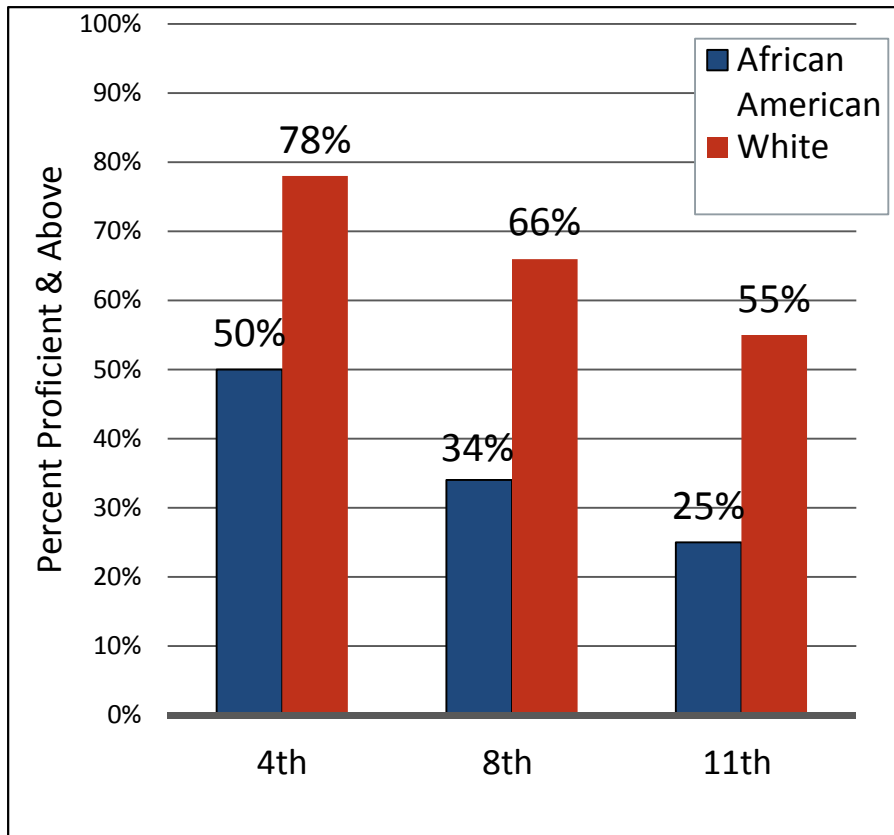
Mission Statement

The Education Trust – West works for the high academic achievement of all students at all levels, kindergarten through college, and toward forever closing the achievement gaps that separate low-income students and students of color from other youth.

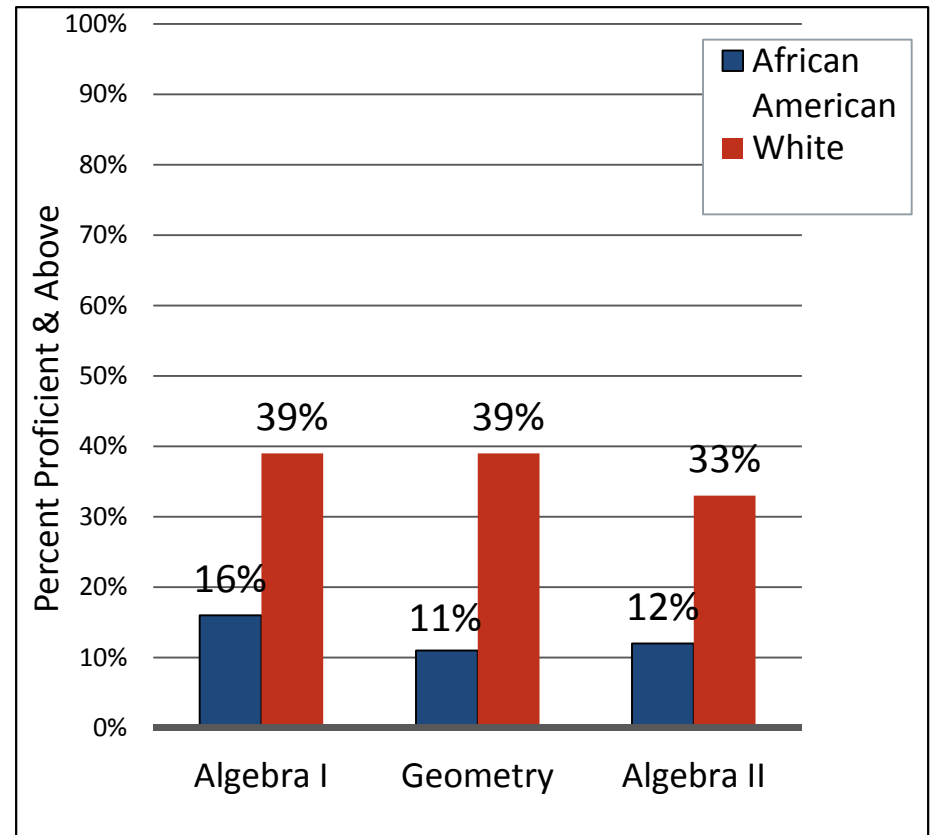
Our basic tenet is this: All children will learn at high levels when they are taught to high levels.

African-American Student Achievement

CST Proficiency Rates in English (2009)



CST Proficiency Rates in Math (2009)



Source: California Department of Education, 2009

Examining African-American student achievement: Does culture affect learning?

- Cultural differences exist between the school environment and the cultural backgrounds of diverse students (Au & Jordan, 1981; Delpit, 1996; Heath, 1983; Philips, 1972).
- This cultural incompatibility can contribute to:
 - negative teacher perceptions of ability
 - decreased student engagement
 - decreased achievement outcomes among African-American students(Irvine, 1991; Hale-Benson, 1986).
- Studies show **INCREASED** academic performance and engagement among African-American students when pedagogy and curriculum is modified to account for cultural differences (Howard, 2001; Lee, 1993; Teel, DeBruin-Parecki, & Covington, 1998).


Defining Culture...

- **Culture:** An integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviors of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations.

Source: National Center for Cultural Competence, Georgetown University

In small groups, take a moment to reflect and discuss...

- What are cultural norms within traditional public schools?
- What cultural norms do diverse STUDENTS bring to the classroom?
- What cultural norms do EDUCATORS bring to the classroom?



“Determining what ethnically diverse students know and can do, as well as what they are capable of knowing and doing, is often a function of how well teachers can communicate with them.”

Geneva Gay (2002), p.110

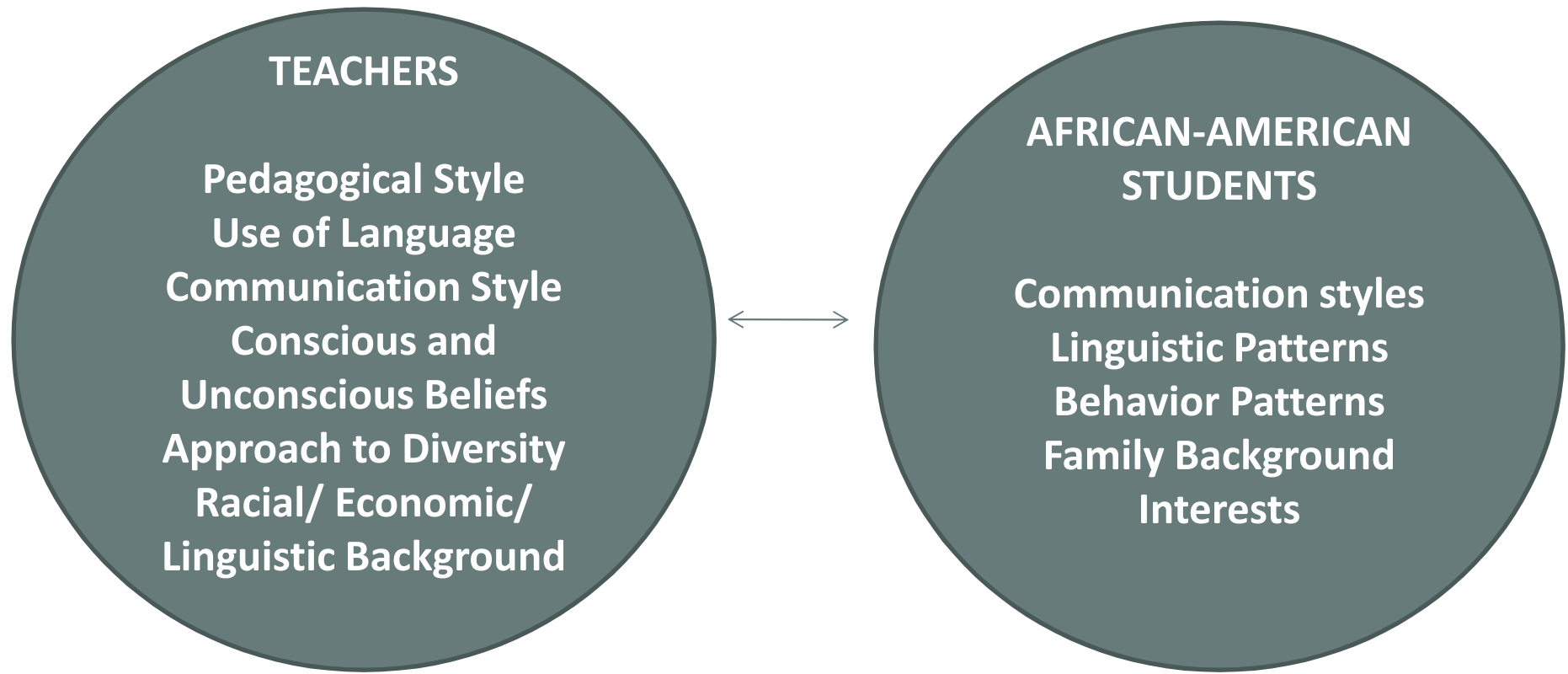
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

- ***Culturally Responsive Teaching*** is defined as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively. It is based on understanding the influences of race, culture, and ethnicity in teaching and learning, and using the cultural experiences, and contributions of different ethnic groups as instrumental tools for teaching academic and social knowledge and skills (Gay, 2000).

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy is Comprised of Three Levels

- (1) Institutional
- (2) Personal
- (3) Instructional

A Bi-directional Approach to Improving Teaching and Student Learning: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy



Myths about Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

- Colorblindness and/or lack of cultural knowledge
- Cannot be incorporated into all curriculum areas
- The hands of educators are tied by focus on standards, testing, and required textbooks
- Neglects rigorous instruction and high-levels of achievement which all students will need to succeed

Developing a culturally responsive learning environment starts with school leadership



It's up to leaders to send the message that cultural competency matters



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How School Leaders Can Develop A Culturally Responsive Learning Environment

- Hiring Practices
- Professional Development
- Empowering Families and Encouraging Parent Involvement

**School leadership can
explore the cultural
competencies of
prospective teachers during
the hiring process**



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Hiring Considerations

Other than seeking great teachers who are experts in their content area, it is important to consider the following:

- Personal background and experience with adversity- Can they intimately relate to the students they teach?
- Ask the candidate what their educational credo is- gets to passion for students and connection to their practice.
- Does candidate discuss multicultural education? Are they familiar with culturally responsive teaching practices?
- Discuss their interpretations of the term “at-risk”- determines where they place the blame.
- Ensure that respondent discusses social justice, race, socioeconomic status during the interview process.



But what about the school leaders
who cannot select their staff?

School leadership can build the cultural knowledge base of teachers and school staff through Professional Development.



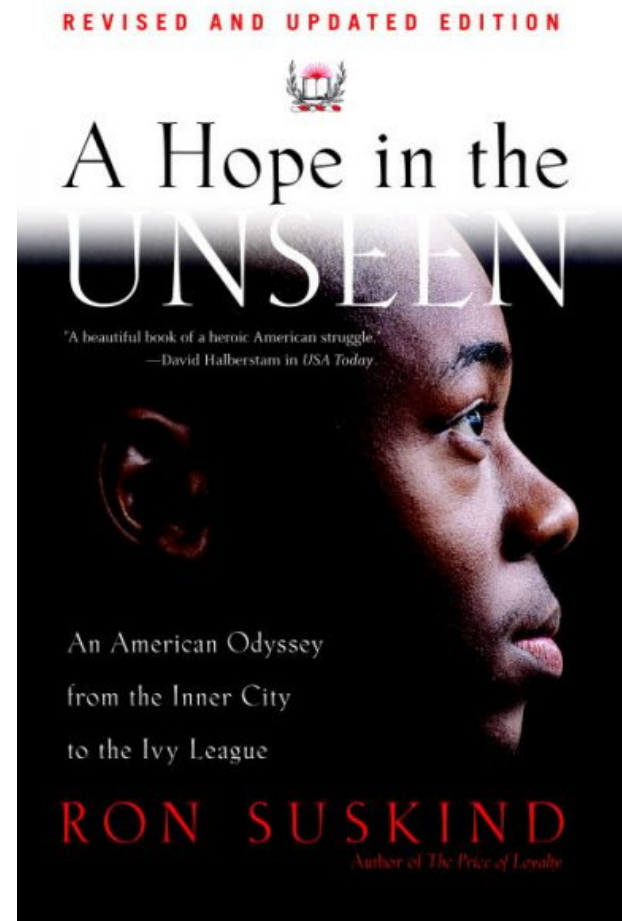
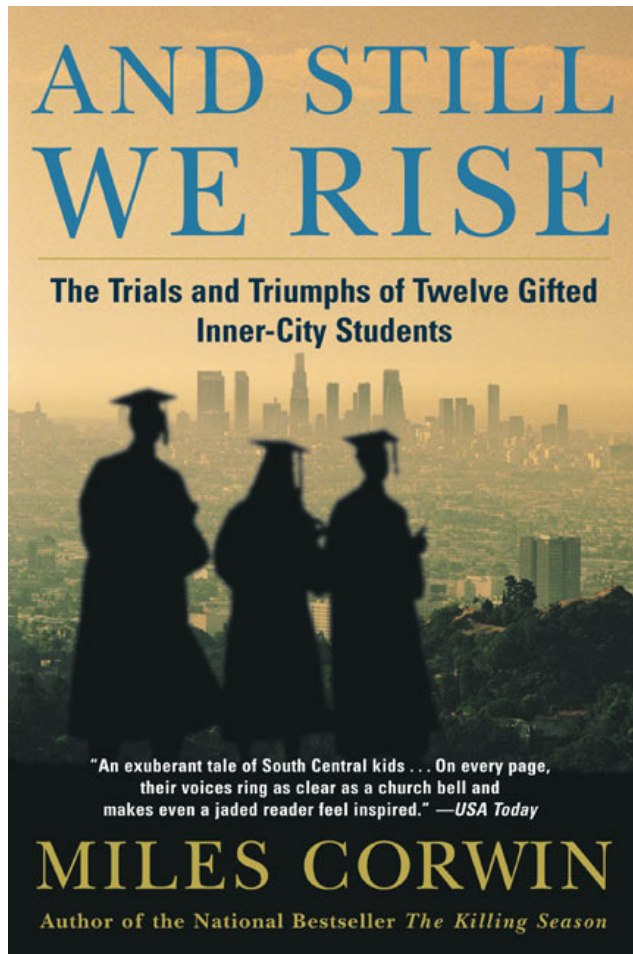
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Professional Development

- Develop an environment where self-reflection is supported, and a safe space where difficult conversations about race and culture can be discussed.

Sample staff reading materials



Classroom Observations

- Awareness of racial dynamics and impact on learning
- Assist as instructional leader with curriculum, instructional practices consistent with culturally responsive teaching and classrooms

**School leaders must
engage and empower
families.**



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It's a partnership

Leadership and parents

- Remember ... It's a partnership!
- Open up your campus and classrooms
- Develop deep relationships
- Help parents understand the system
- Respect their cultural capital



Culturally Responsive Teaching

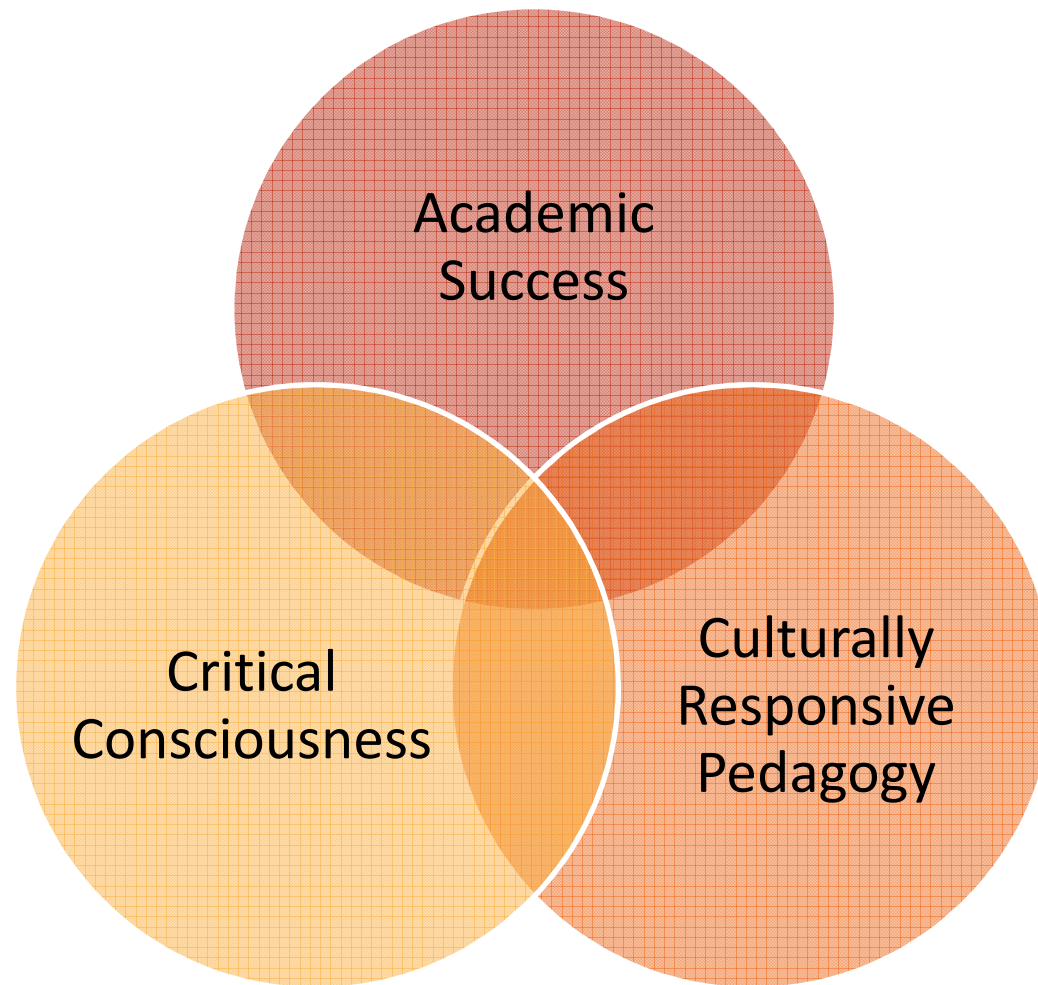
Culturally Responsive Teaching

1. Revisiting Myths about culturally responsive teaching
2. Overlapping emphases of culturally responsive learning environments
3. Culturally responsive lesson planning
4. Strategies for developing a culturally responsive learning environment

Re-visiting Myths about Culturally Responsive Teaching

- Colorblindness and/or lack of cultural knowledge
- Cannot be incorporated into all curriculum areas
- The hands of educators are tied by focus on standards, testing, and required textbooks
- Neglects rigorous instruction and high-levels of achievement which all students will need to succeed

Overlapping Emphases Of Culturally Responsive Learning Environment



Culturally Responsive Lesson Planning

- Begin with the standards
- Think through the lesson from a student-centered perspective

Beginning with the standard

CA Algebra 1 Standard 9.0 – Solving Systems of Linear Equations

- “Students solve systems of two linear equations in two variables algebraically and are able to interpret the answer graphically.”

Introductory Activity – Is this lesson culturally responsive?

- Read lesson handout
 - Think of alternative ways of teaching this concept from a culturally responsive mindset.
 - Jot those examples down at the top or side of the page.

Walkthrough of “Guy Delage” introductory activity

- $S + F = 24$
- $3S + 1F = 44$

- $S = ?$
- $F = ?$
- Couldn't we structure this introductory problem in another way?

How many hours did I sleep last night?

- The body “heals” cells at a rate of roughly 3 million cells an hour when you are sleeping. When you are awake it heals at roughly 1 million cells an hour. If I told you that yesterday (all 24 hours of it) I healed 44 million of my damaged cells, then how many hours did I sleep for and how many hours was I awake?

Walkthrough of “Sleep” introductory activity

- $S = \text{hours I slept}; A = \text{hours I was awake}$
- $S + A = 24$
- $3S + 1A = 44$

- $S = ?$
- $A = ?$
- How much did I have to change?

One example of another way might be...


- In 2000, the number of college-age African-Americans (Age 18-24) incarcerated in California was 4200 and growing at a rate of 200 people per year
- In that same year, the number of African-Americans enrolled in the University of California system was 4400 and growing at a rate of 175 people per year

UC/Prison System-Dilema

- Num of AA Prisoners = $200 (\text{Num years since 2000}) + 4200$
- Num of AA UC Students = $175 (\text{Num years since 2000}) + 4400$
- How many years until Num of AA Prisoners = Num of AA UC Students
- **Answer = Eight years. 2008 was the first time since all 9 campuses have been open that this has happened**



Additional Examples of Culturally Responsive Teaching



Moving forward, how can culturally responsive pedagogy be implemented on a wider scale?

Small group discussion: What are ways that all stakeholders can become involved?

- Administrators
- Parents
- Teachers
- Community Members

For more information:

Addressing Diversity in Schools: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

http://www.nccrest.org/Briefs/Diversity_Brief.pdf

Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching (2000) , by Geneva Gay

<http://www.sagepub.com/eis/Gay.pdf>

Download this presentation on our website!
www.edtrustwest.org



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