

# Why Culture Matters:

Culturally Responsive Education That Nurtures the  
Whole Child!

Dr. Tonia Renee Durden



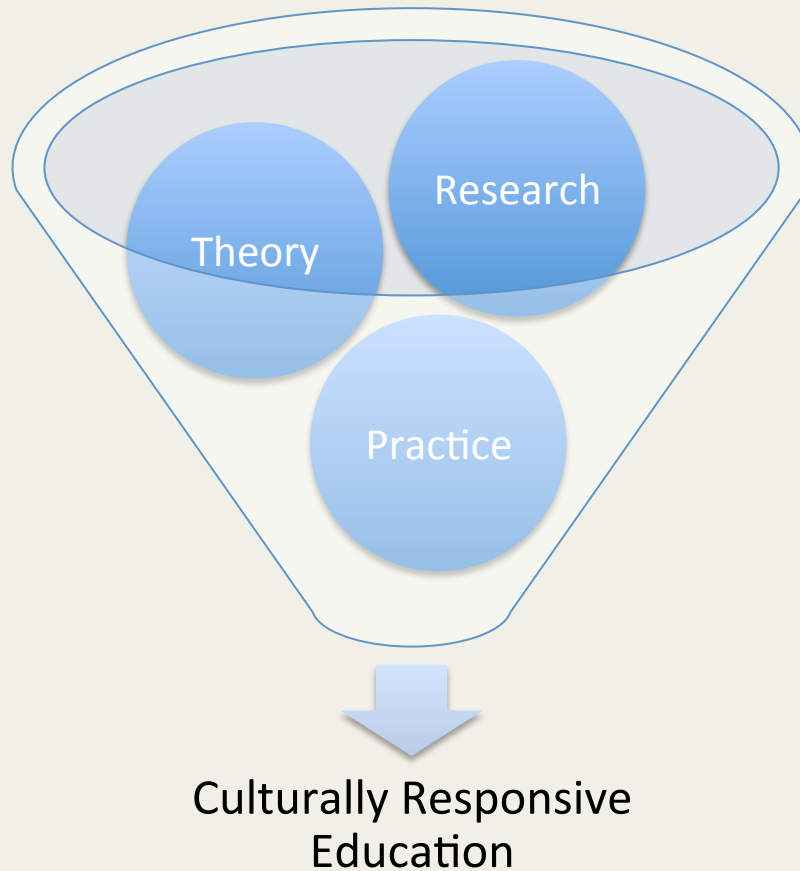
Imagine!

# Casserian Engeri



إن التعليم متاح لكل شخص في الولايات المتحدة بغض النظر عن عمر الشخص أو عرقه أو دينه أو طبقته الاجتماعية. التعليم العام مجاني ويفرضه القانون على جميع الأطفال بين عمر 6 و 16 وقد يكون متاحا للأطفال بعمر أصغر أو أكبر حسب أنظمة المنطقة التعليمية المحلية. وللأبوين خيار آخر وهو تسجيل أبنائهم في مدارس خاصة وللكثير من هذه المدارس ارتباطات دينية إلا أن أجور التعليم فيها غالبا ما تكون باهظة. ويمكن أن يكون التعليم لما بعد المرحلة الإعدادية باهظا جدا.

# Flow~



# ¿Qué pasa ahora?



# Assumptions

- Theory of Mind & Affect: We value the culture, language and knowledge of culturally and linguistically diverse children and families
- Research: We respect, honor and accept the 80+ years of research on the holistic benefits of culturally responsive education for diverse children
- Practice: We understand or in the process of understanding our own culture. We have or intend to teach who we are and who children are-responsively! (Que Pasa Ahora!)

# Assumptions

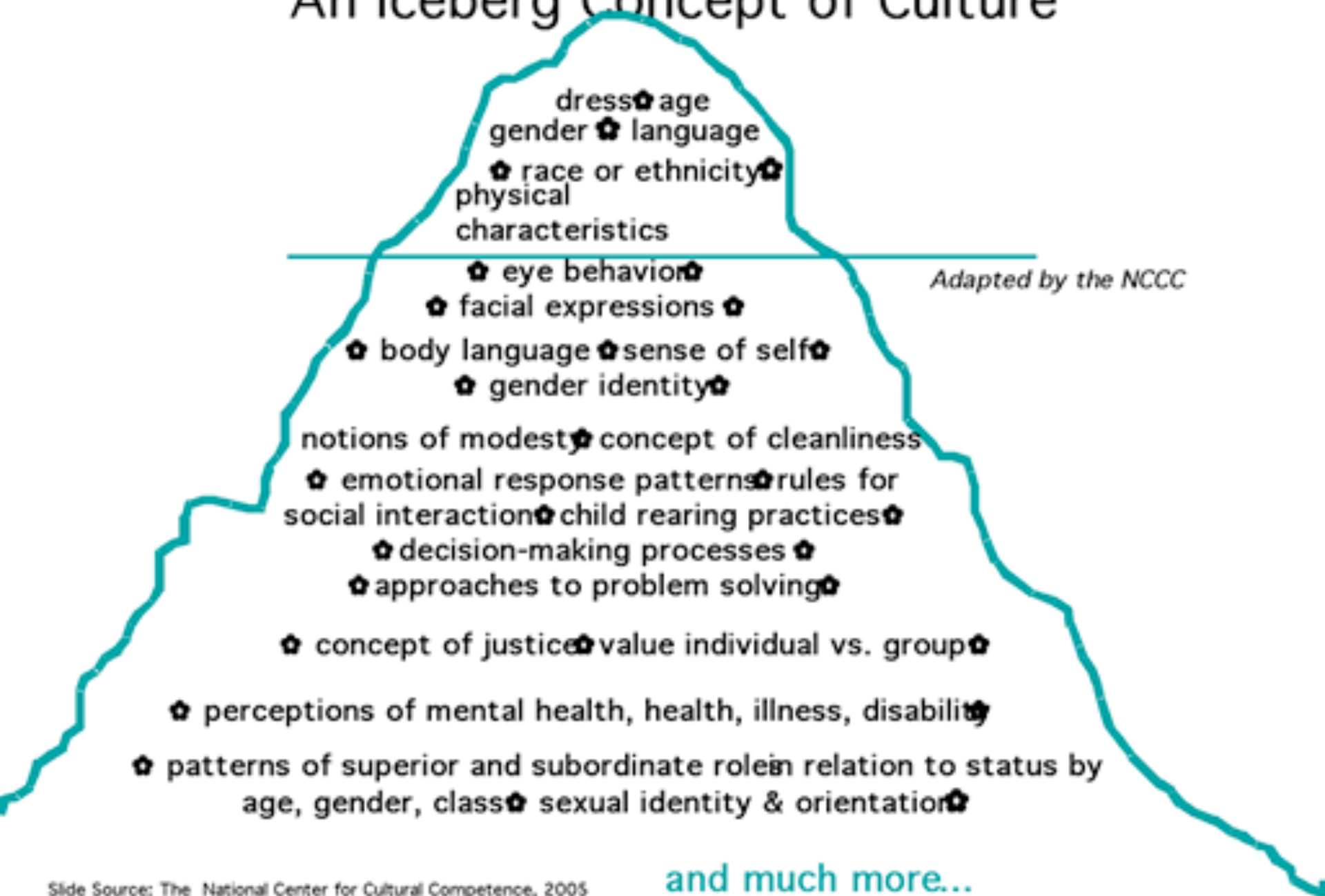
- We take initiative to understand, become knowledge about and share with others how our ‘systems’ contribute to and reduce cultural and racial disparities & inequities.



# Terminology

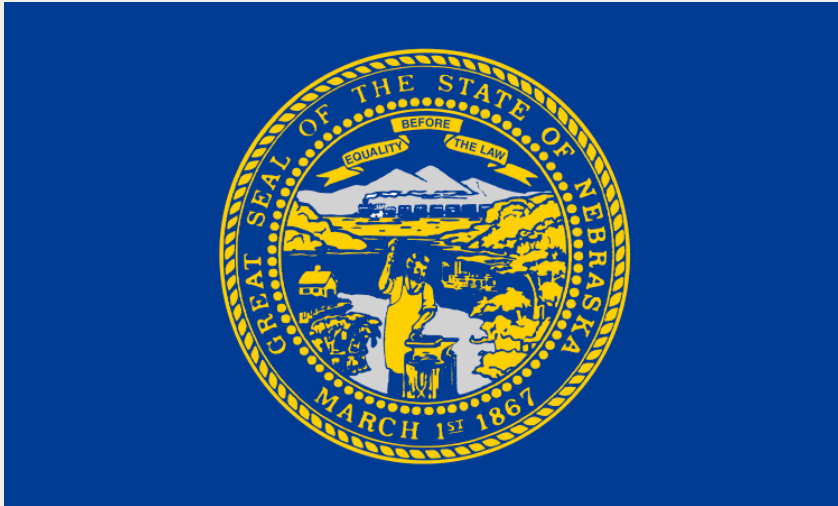
- CLD children are those who identify as belonging to an ethnically and/or linguistically diverse cultural group
- Culture as: Customs, Values, Items (invisible and visible)

# An Iceberg Concept of Culture



# State of Nebraska

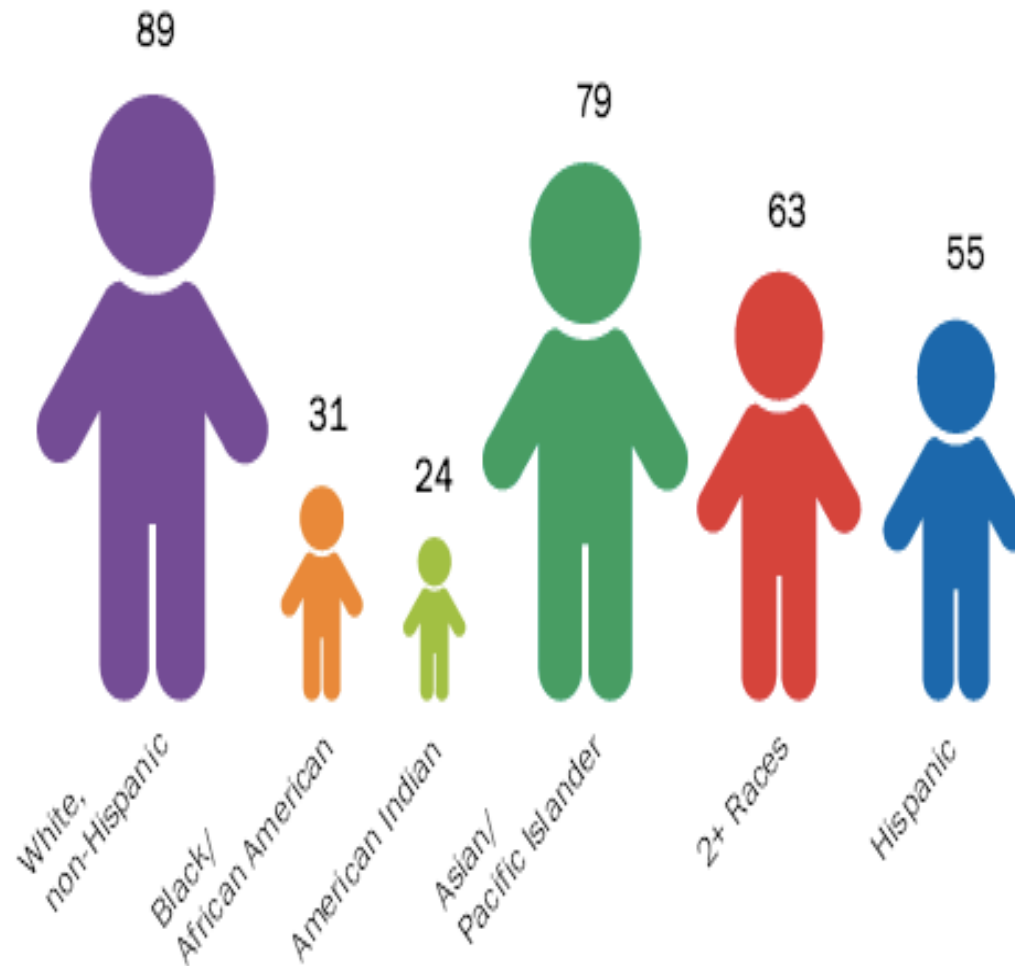
- Equality before the Law



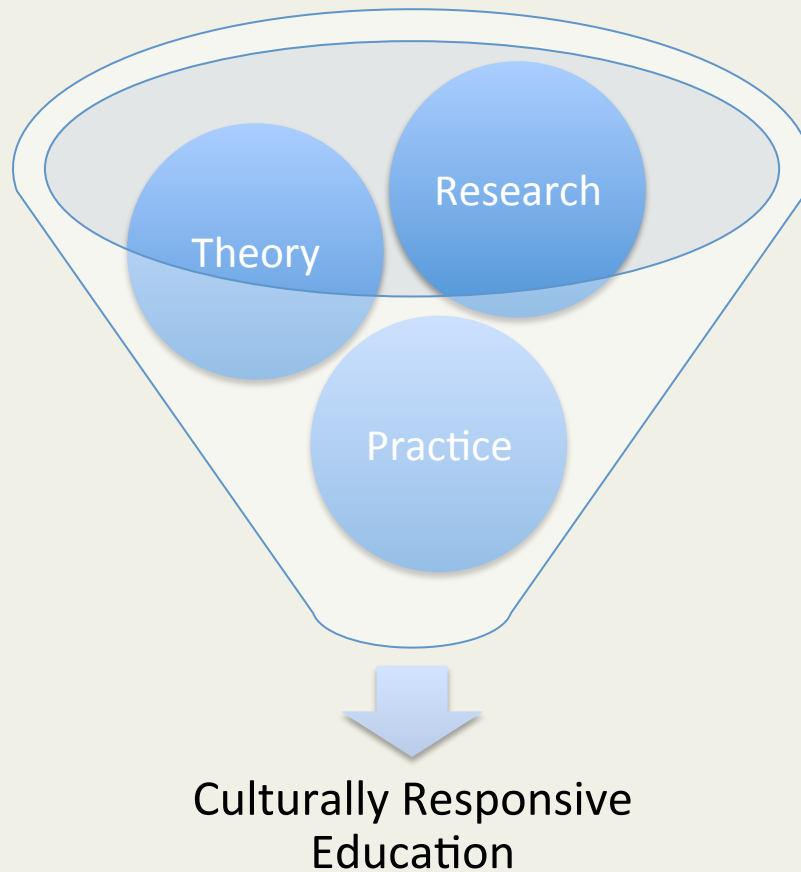
- Nebraska will become the best place in the nation to be a baby

# State of Nebraska

## *Index of Race & Opportunity Overall Score*



# Flow~



- Reframe our Language, Beliefs and Practices
- **Critically Conscious Professionals**
- Master Professionals and High Quality



# First

Reframe-language, beliefs, theory of  
mind

# Theory

- What does *culturally-relevant* mean?
- What is “the culture of you?”



- 
- Theory
  - Research
  - Practice: **Que Pasa Ahora!**



# Who said it?

- “ I think therefore I am”?
- I am because WE are, and since we are therefore I am”
- What happens to a dream deferred?
- We was all dreamin the same dream...

# Theory



Critical Pedagogy



Culturally Relevant Teaching Beliefs & Practices

Culturally Responsive Education



# Theory

Ladson-Billings (1994) defines *culturally-relevant* [teaching] as, “pedagogy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 17-18).



# FIRST

Teachers must:

1. Believe that all students can succeed.
2. Maintain affirming student-teacher relationships.
3. See excellence as a complex standard that takes student diversity and individual differences into account (Ladson-Billings, 1999, 2014; Paris, 2012).

*\*These practices need to be stable over time.*



# SECOND

Learning is socially and culturally mediated (Groulx & Silva, 2010).

- Cultural and linguistic experiences





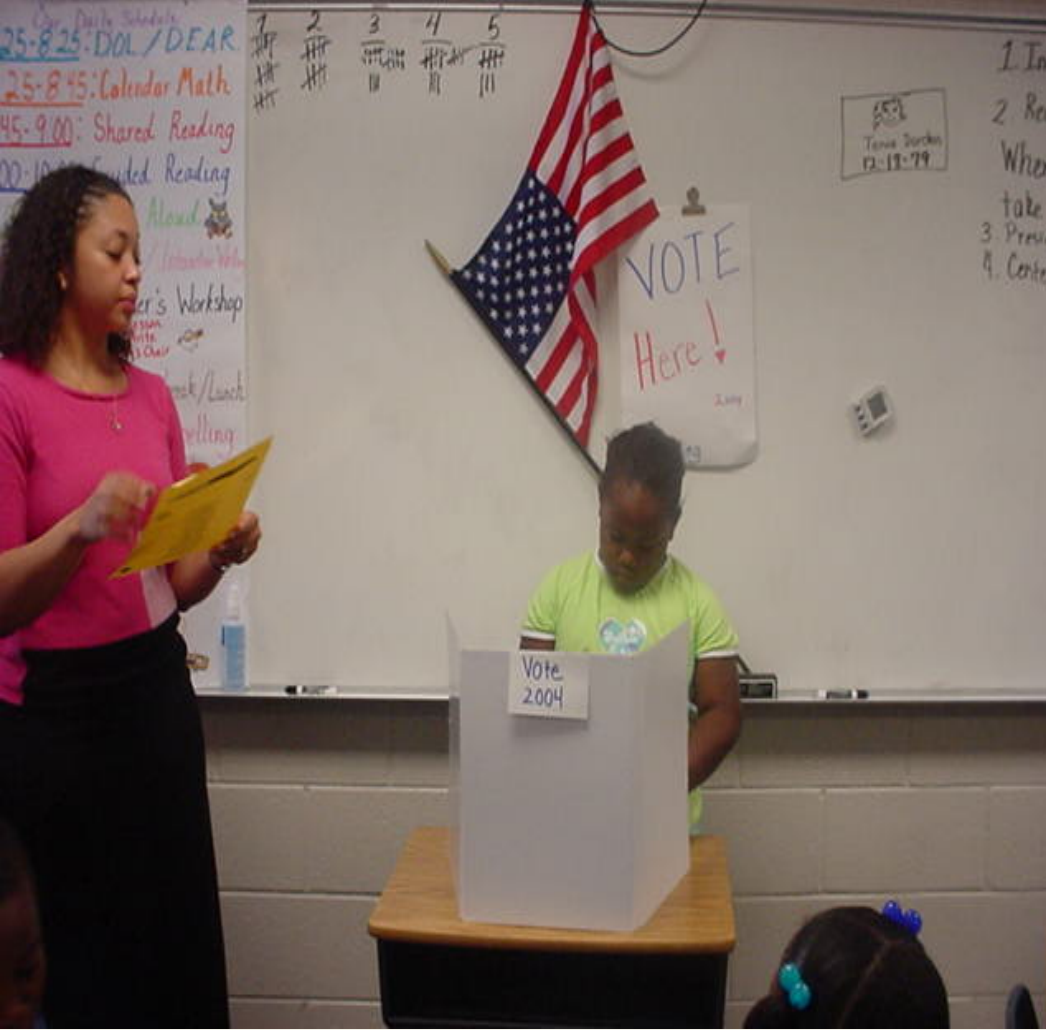


*and...*

- Have a deep understanding that teaching is a sociopolitical act and how the classroom can support equity, justice, and opportunity (Banks, 1993; Derman-Sparks, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

**An awareness that children's social identities predisposes them to "isms" (e.g., race & native language)**

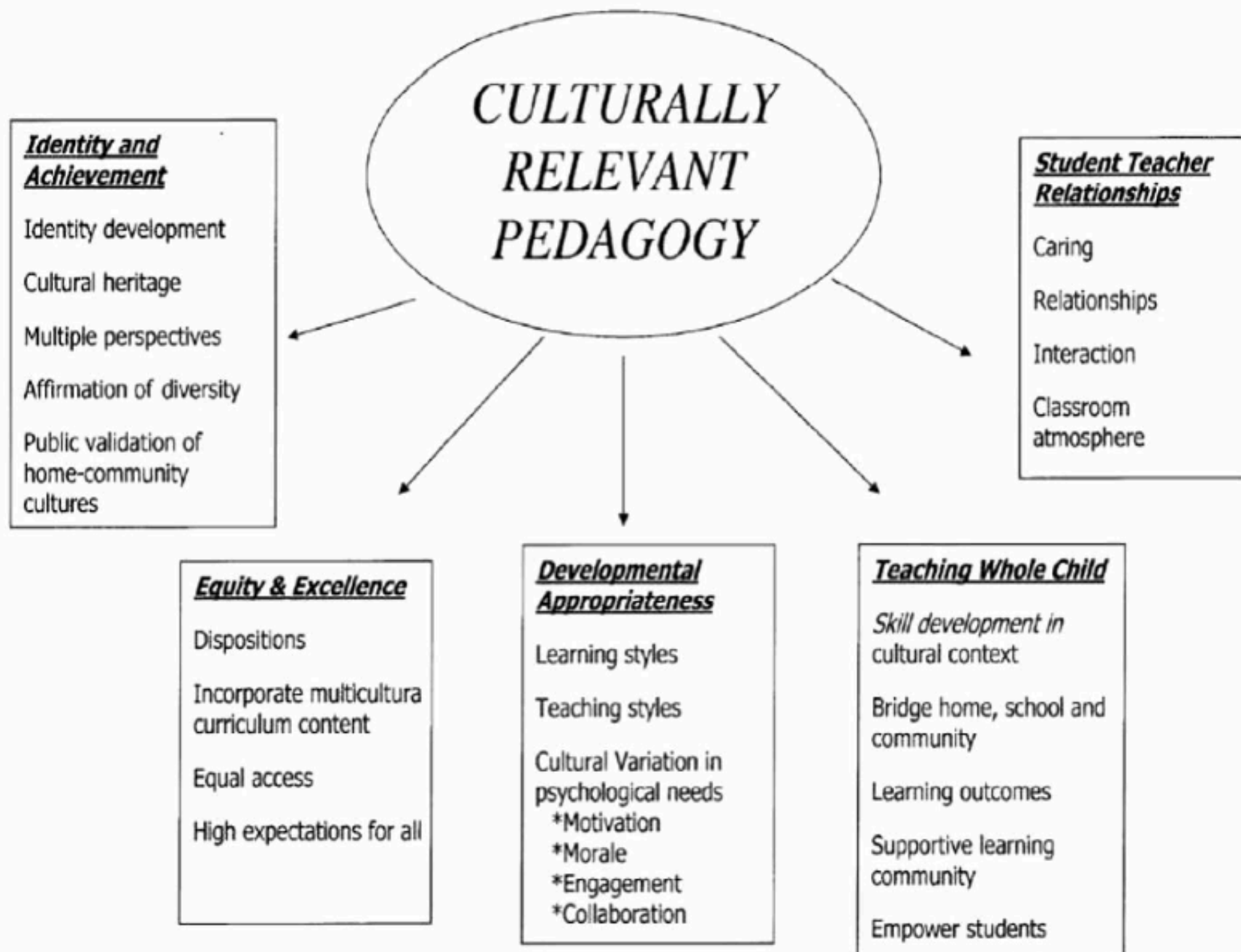
**Engage in critical reflective practice**




# CRP: Whole Child!

- Cognitive Development: *Complex cognitive process & cultural synapsis*
- Social & Emotional Development: *Peer groups; Attachment & Emotional Supports*
- Physical Development: *Behavioral & Physical Health & Wellness*
- Cultural Development: *Positive Cultural Identity*
- *Long term and sustainable benefits and successful outcomes (Continuity of CRP\* \*)*

# The Principles of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy



- 
- Well that's just good teaching! Teaching that supports the holistic development of children!

Yes and....

- Culturally Responsive education combines 'good quality teaching & best practices' + 'culturally relevantly {and the belief in it} as the base of ALL teaching & learning'

# CRP as...

- A community of learners encouraged
- Reciprocal learning and teaching
- Collaborative engagement, teaching and dialog encouraged
- Connections made between children's community, national & global identities
- Ideology as pulling or mining knowledge out instead of putting knowledge in or banking in.



# Recap

- Theory: Culturally Responsive Education-the theory of mind and belief system as first step
- Research: *The Dream Keepers*-Gloria Ladson Billings ( 1994 & 2014); *The skin we speak, thoughts on language and culture in the classroom*-Lisa Delpit (2008); *Anti-bias education* (2010)- Louis Derman Sparks



# ¿Qué pasa ahora?



## Reframe our Ideology & Language

- The tale of hardships, achievement, gaps and deficit perceptions
- Shift towards: identifying and building upon the funds of knowledge children bring & have
- Closing the achievement gap of at risk and disadvantaged children
- Shift towards :Closing our cultural and knowledge gap as educators, leaders and professionals. Stop gap gazing and create opportunities

## Reframe our Ideology & Language

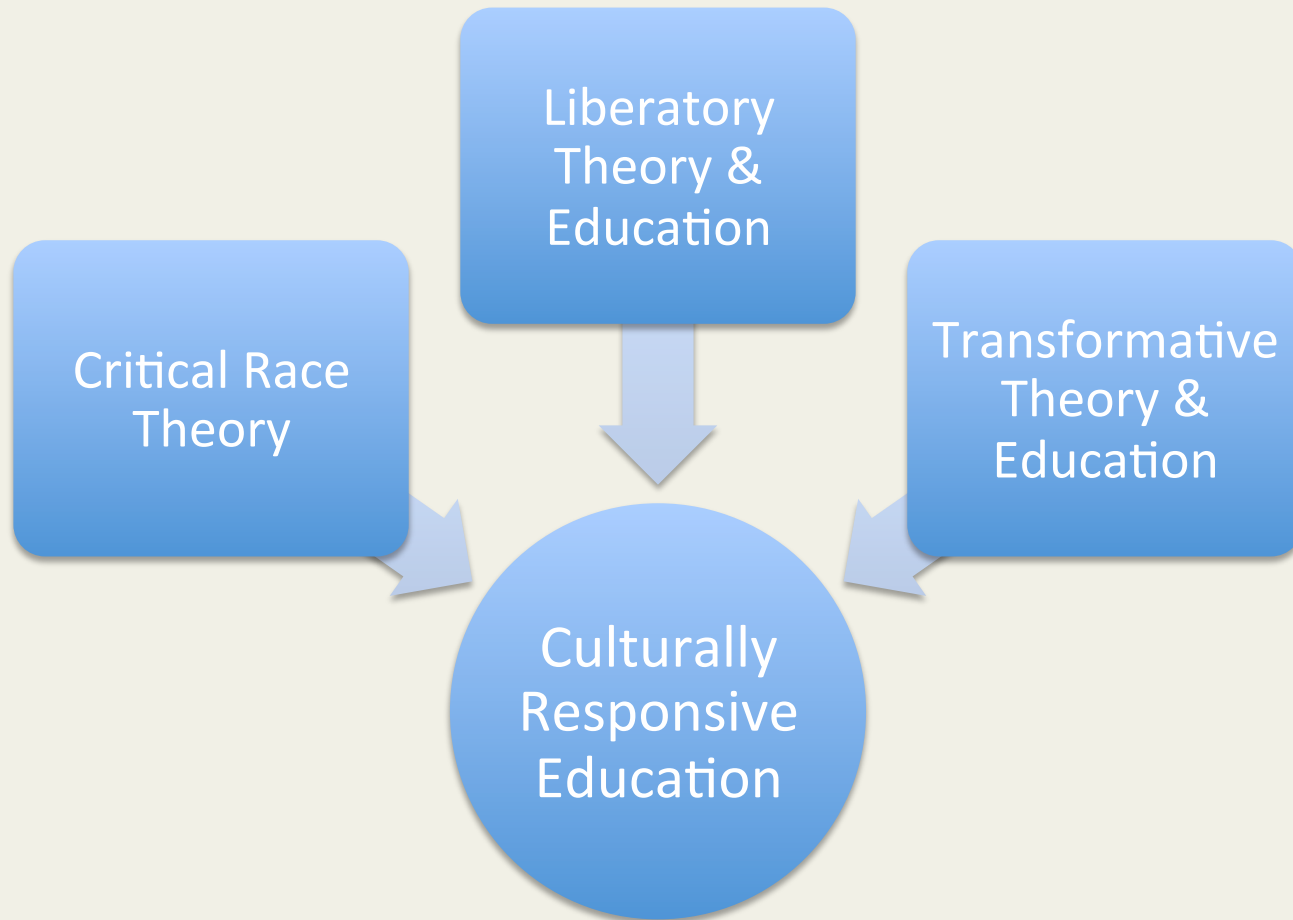
- Minimum/basic standards towards standards of excellence
- **Shift towards: a standard of excellence and high expectations**
- Take home task: What language do you use to describe, label and categorize the children and families you serve? What beliefs do you have about the children & families you serve?



# Second

Critically Conscious Professional

# Theories



# Theory

- Critical and multi-contextual Lens
  - Reflective & critical of self, society, social relations and the teaching and learning processes (Freire, 1973)
  - See color and language (Dixon, 2015; Hilliard, 2003)
  - Understand *ecological* complexity of serving CLD children and/or those placed at risk

(Durden, Dooley & Truscott, 2014; & Gay & Kirkland, 2003; King, 2005)

# Research

- How are children's voices and experiences being respected and affirmed?
- How does the program or schools' culture create dissonance for students and their families?
- How is power exerted by the teacher, curriculum, schools, and policies to perpetuate oppressive systems in society?
- How do YOU transmit a dominant ideology or belief that is detrimental to students
- (Hilliard, 1997; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Sleeter & Bernal, 2004)

# Research

- **Micro-aggressions**, implicit bias and prejudice impedes implementation of culturally responsive education and a **primary catalyst** for over representation of CLD children (particularly AA & Latino boys) in special education and lack therefore of CLD children in gifted programs
- Culturally responsive teachers, leaders and professionals = critically conscious of multiple influences that impact children & cultural learners



# ¿Qué pasa ahora?



- **Self Reflection:** Where I'm From Activity

Cultural & Community Inventory: Knowledge, Feelings, Experiences

Micro-aggression activity (UNL)

- **Programmatic/school reflection:**

Micro-aggression Activity (UNL)


Race Equity Impact Analysis & Action Guide

Intercultural Development Inventory

<https://idiinventory.com/>)

Implicit Bias Activity (Project Implicit @ Harvard & Kriwan Institute @ OSU)

Works: Derald Sue; Vivian Paley; Paul Gorski, Paulo Freire

- 
- Take home task:
  - What are my knowledge, beliefs and experiences of the children and families I work with?
  - How do I reflect critically on how I may be perpetuating inequity and cultural dissonance towards children, families & colleagues?
  - Do I truly understand the complexity and ecological systems that impact teaching and learning of diverse children?



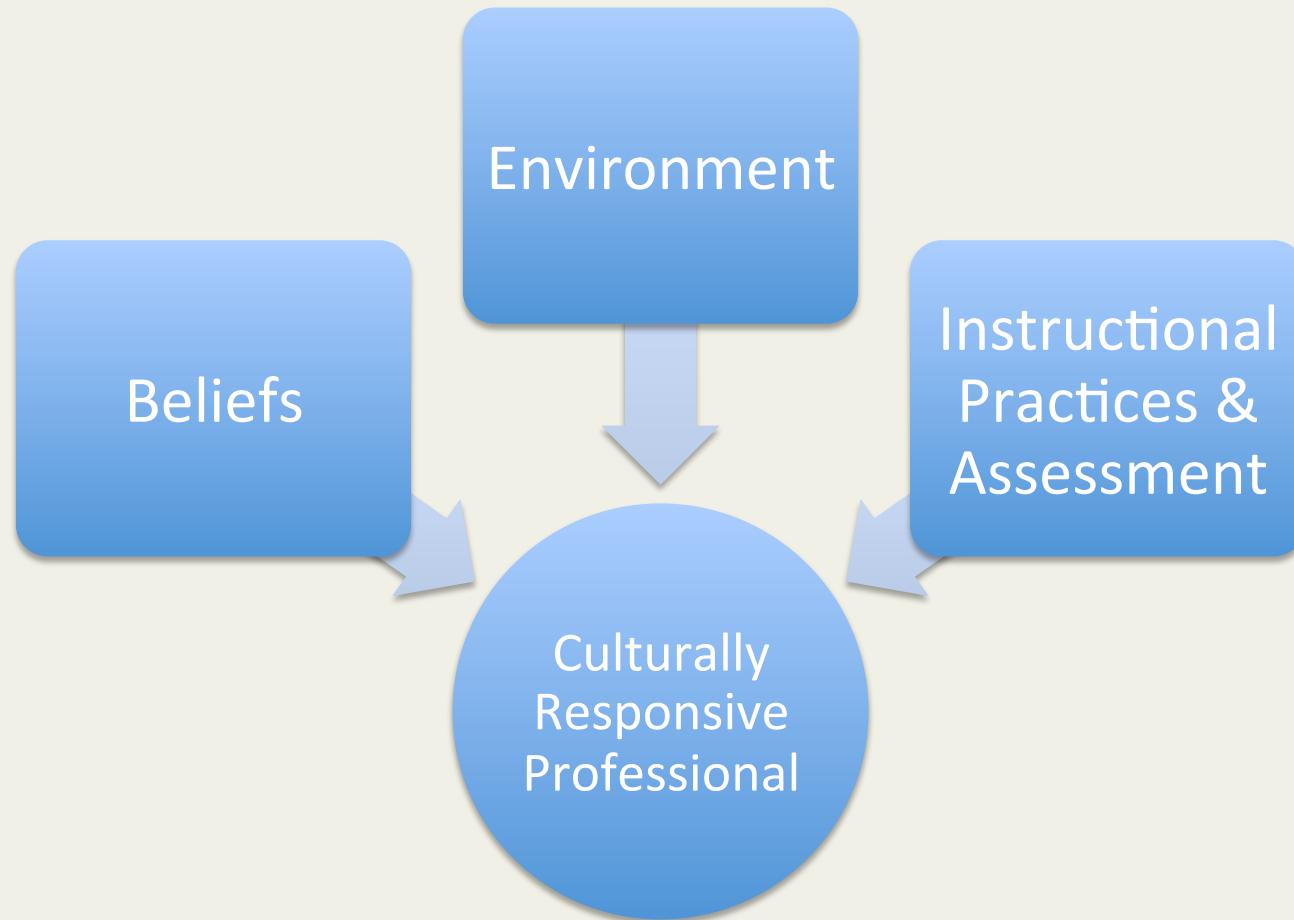
Lastly

We are Master Professionals & High Quality

# Theory

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# Research



# Examples

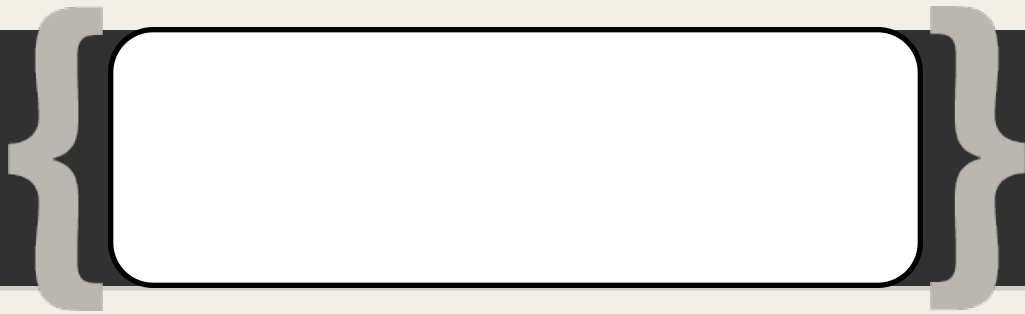
- ....From Nebraska! Of Quality early learning environments for young children



# Research Questions

- (1) What are teachers and parents beliefs about and experiences with culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP) within an ethnically diverse early childhood program?
- (2) How are children's socio-cultural development and awareness encouraged in a quality early childhood program?



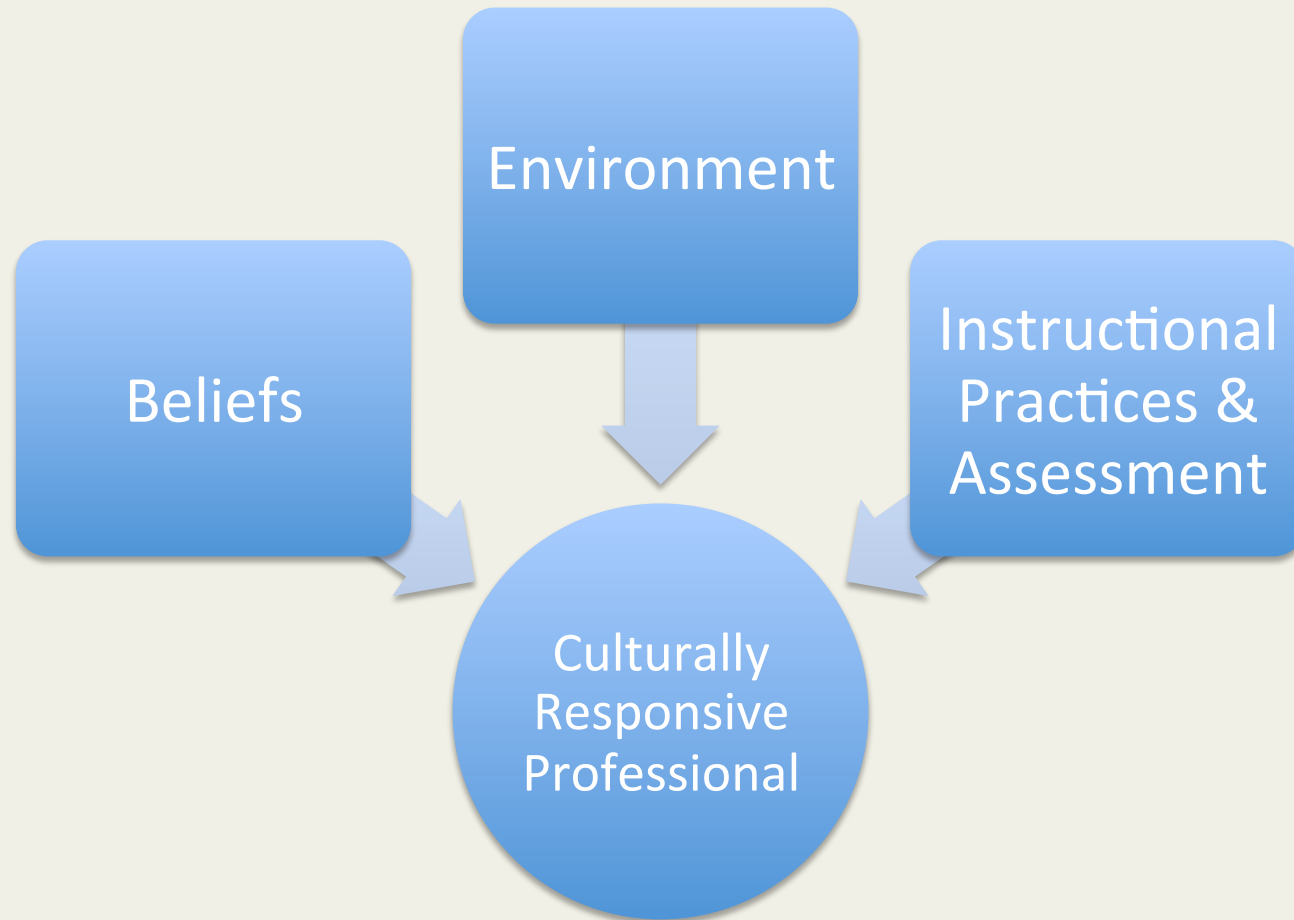


Heterogeneous – Research Site 1

African American: Research Site 2

Burma, Sudan & Bhutan: Research Site 3

# Research



## Research Site 2

- Academic success & social/emotional skill development educational priority
- Standard of excellence
- Responsive and affirming relationships with children
- Collective responsibility and need for the larger village
- Imani CDC as affirming positive images of African Americans
- Concerns of continuity of CRP & perpetuation of negative stereotypes in primary years

Beliefs

# Parent's Voice

I have 3, the other 2 are here.....They're older. They just took off. They all went here and did the preschool. It's more like a positive image of themselves... I'd like to just get them off and start off on the right track of seeing positive images other than me and my wife, my family, whatever... African Americans in [city, state] doing positive things because you just turn on the TV and you'll see all this mess that they get bombarded with every day about how it's bad and you have to be this way or you have to act this way to be Black and cool. We brought them to [Imani's CDC] to start them off with these positive images and this is what reality is, you know. I think that was one of the biggest things the teachers—we know the teachers and talk to them anytime; you know they're developing their social skills.

# Teachers' Voice

*“I try to match their feelings and get on their level...let them express their emotions to me. I just try to be another mother”- Lead Teacher*

Connectedness with students (‘other mothering’)

Environment

# Leader's Voice

It starts with and it has to be that parent involvement is the key to your success. A higher level of expectation. I had this conversation last week with a parent and another director. The question was “How are you so sure about your day-to-day operations with your staff?” I said “Because my expectation is that they mirror my image.” I’m very empathetic. I’m very engaged with my families. I’m very involved with the kids. I’m just involved in the community. I take a vested interest in their success and my staff has taken up that on as our moral compass for how we operate.

# Environmental Supports- Research Site 1

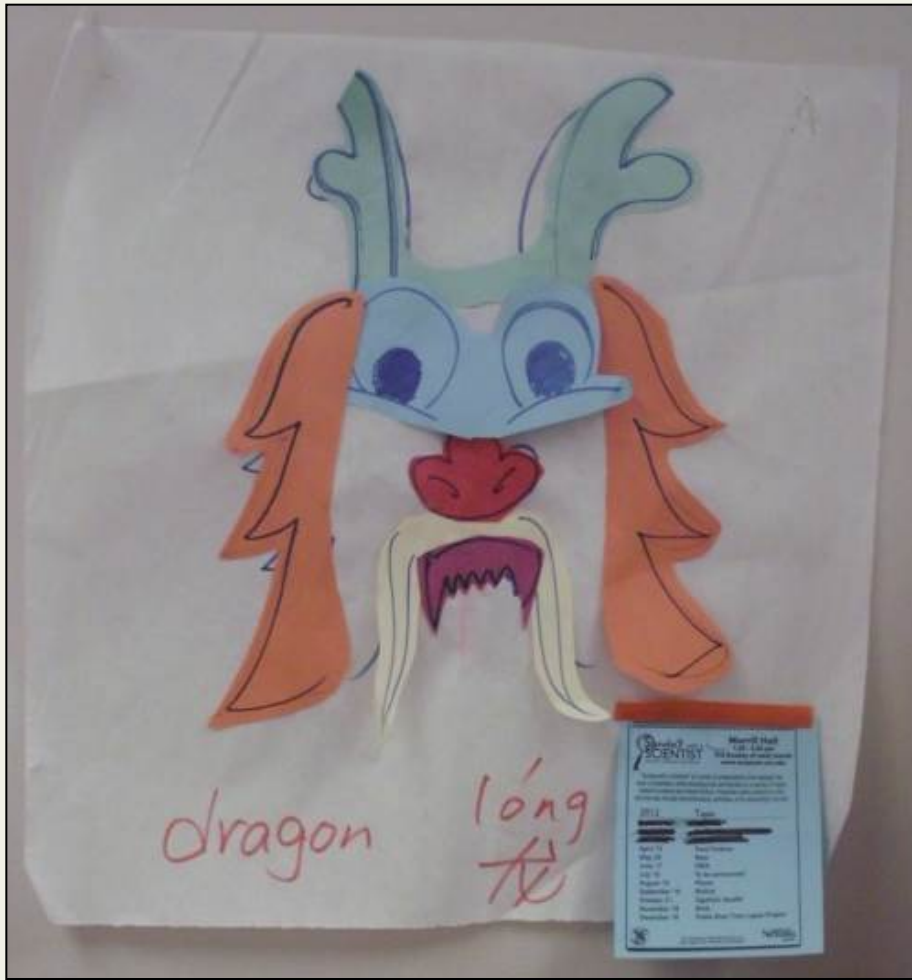
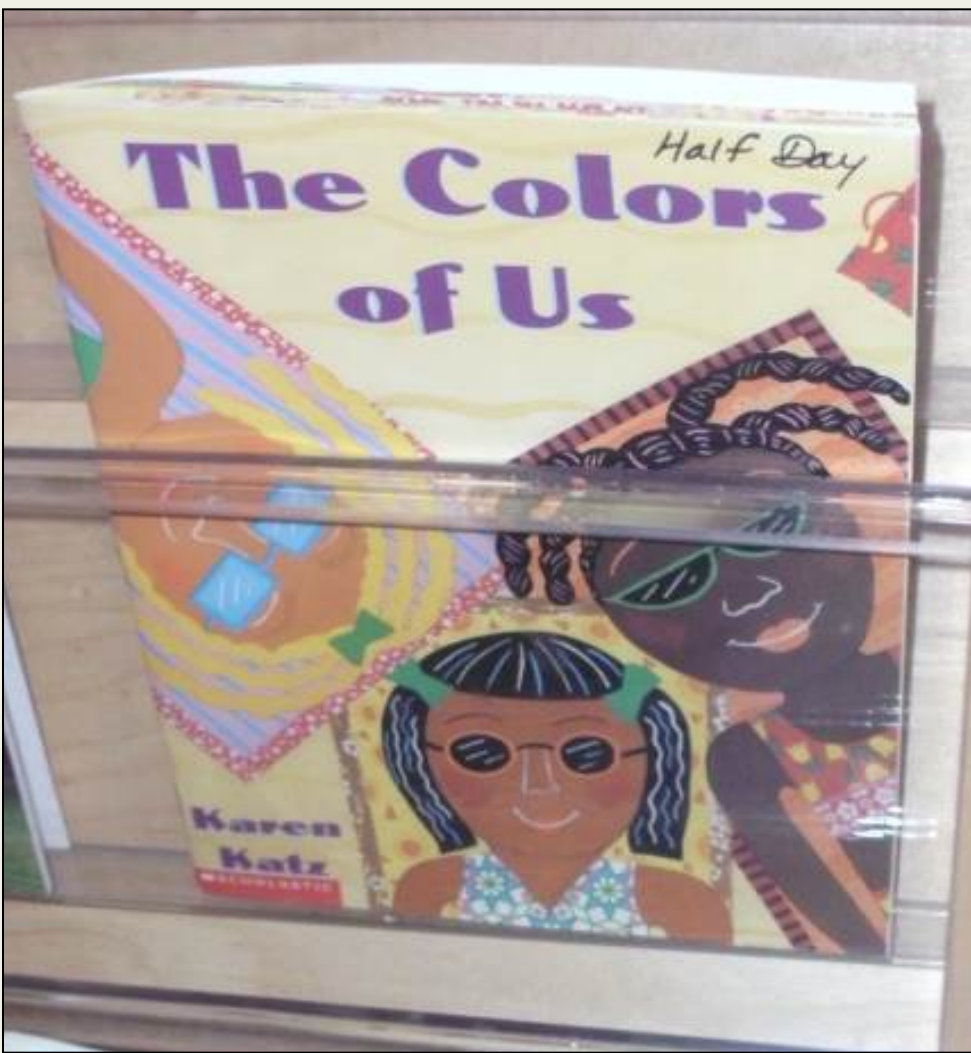


- Welcome lobby features  
“Welcome” in various languages.

Environment










## Materials

Children's library features inclusive books such as "My First Chinese New Year," "Policewoman Sue," and "Rainbow Joe and Me."



*“I think [Kids Play] does a great job showing diverse backgrounds. We’re constantly rotating our books and I notice that our children chose books that show like different ethnicities or represent their own ethnicity. One child brought a book home from her home language and was really excited to share with us even though we can’t read it.”- Teacher*

## Research Site 3

- Staff had a heightened awareness and understanding of how children's culture & language greatly influences the **quality** of the early learning experiences for children
- Program located within the community and homes of where children and families lived
- Cultural Ambassadors provides native language instruction

Instructional  
Practices &  
Assessment

# Instructional Practices & Assessment- Research Site 3

- Instruction and Assessment captures children's multiple literacies
- Children's names and pictures posted
- Non verbal and native language encouraged and supported
- Portfolio system implemented

## Instructional Practices & Assessment- Research Site 3

- Program goals and efforts focused on parent empowerment & agency
- Program provided extended learning opportunities for children and families (field trips; 'life skills' debriefing; cultural connector)

## Voices from Parents & Teachers

"Sometimes to make them understand more and to be clear... I talk to them in English and then I try to explain in Karenni." *(Teacher)*

"If the teacher can teach them in their language, it would be really good. In our class, we study three languages, like Burmese, our language and English" *(Parent)*

" I want my child to be well educated and when he grows up be successful." *(Parent)*

"We incorporate their culture as much as ours. Just to ask them questions about, you know, their lifestyle and "Have you seen this before?" or "What's this word in your language?" *(Teacher)*

# ¿Qué pasa ahora?





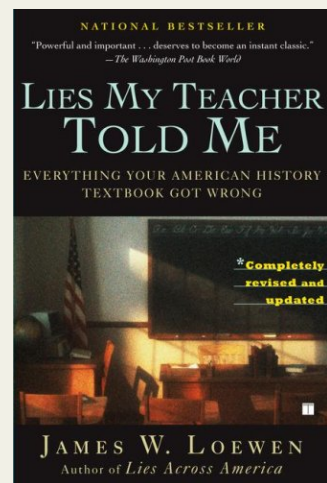
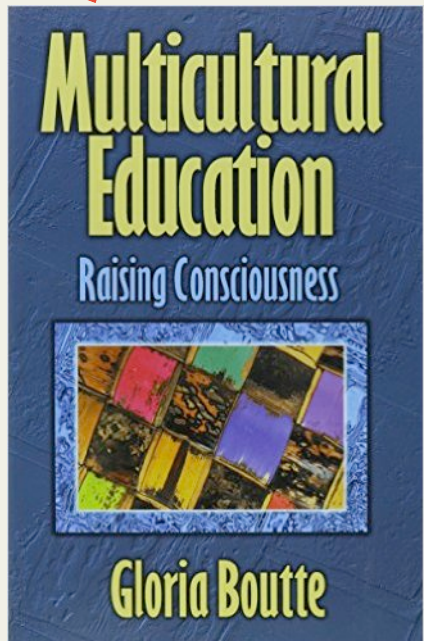
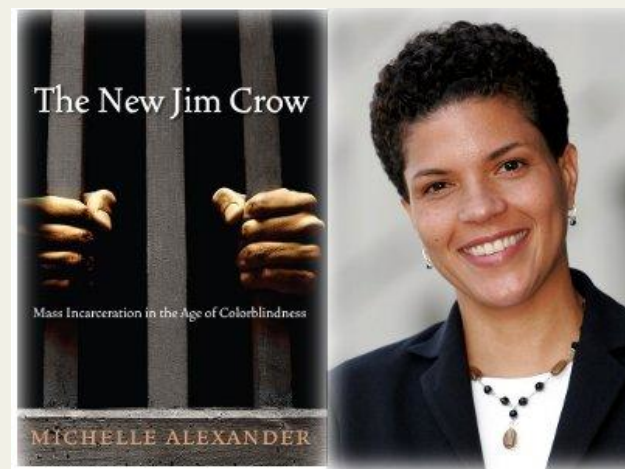
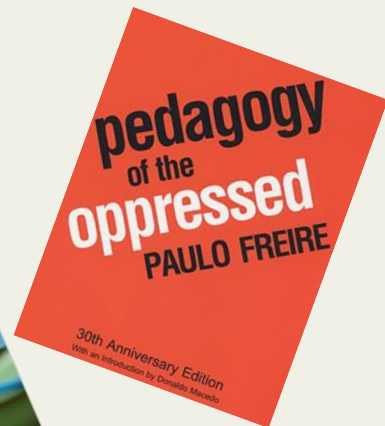
# Cultural Inventory


- How does the physical environment captures the human diversity within and outside the setting?
- How does the interactions and practices build upon the culture and language of the children and families you serve?
- How am I equipped with the necessary skills and tools to implement culturally responsive education?

# Resources

- Anti-bias Checklist (See Derman-Sparks)
- Culture Matters! (Tonia Durden)
- [Child.unl.edu](http://Child.unl.edu)-Diversity Section
- White House Briefings (Dr. Iheoma Iruka)
- Zero to Three special edition March 2015; 35( 4) (engaging culturally and linguistically diverse families)
- Child Advocacy Groups & Grass Roots Efforts in Nebraska & Omaha

• Coming Soon: Reducing Health Disparities: Research Updates from the field



- 
- Take home task:
  - Reflect on how you are striving towards implementing culturally responsive education in theory and practice.
  - How do children respond to culturally responsive education being implemented (Coming Soon: CASI work)

# CRP: Whole Child!

- Cognitive Development: *Complex cognitive process & cultural synapsis*
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# Why Diversity Matters

## The Rose that Grew From Concrete

Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete?  
Proving nature's law is wrong it learned to walk without having feet.  
Funny it seems, but by keeping its dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air.  
Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else ever cared.  
You see you wouldn't ask why the rose that grew from the concrete  
Had damaged petals. On the contrary we would all celebrate its tenacity  
We would love its will to reach the sun  
Well, we are the rose-this is the concrete-and these are  
My damaged petals. Don't ask me why, thank God..., ask me how!  
Tupac Shakur (1999)



# Continued Conversations?

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