Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction

A White Paper
by Keys to Literacy

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Unlocking literacy for all learners.

Our Mission:

We believe the ability to read and write is the foundation for all learning and essential for a fulfilling and impactful life. We also believe effective, culturally responsive literacy instruction is a critical equity issue. Our mission is to provide high-quality, engaging, and sustainable professional development that is aligned to research-based literacy instruction. The goal is to help educators teach literacy skills in a way that increases literacy achievement for all students.

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"Literacy is a fundamental civil right, a powerful protection from the school to prison pipeline, and the cornerstone for a life of choice and fulfillment."
(FULCRUM – Full and Complete Reading is a Universal Mandate)

What is Culturally Responsive Teaching?

Culturally responsive teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of meeting students where they are culturally and linguistically. It puts students at the center of instruction that validates and affirms students' identities, and gives students from historically marginalized communities an equitable education experience. When culturally responsive educators validate and affirm students and bring them where they need to be academically, students are more likely to feel recognized, valued for their contributions, and eager to learn. (Hollie, 2017)

Educators use varying definitions that emphasize different aspects of culturally responsive teaching, but there is a common theme among all definitions. It is a strategy for engaging all students where teachers

- use culturally diverse and inclusive practices that recognize and validate students' home cultures and languages as assets;
- communicate and hold all students to the same high expectations and provide instruction so all students can access the same grade-level content;
- are aware of, and take into account linguistic and dialect differences;
- include culturally diverse inclusive practices and curriculum; and
- use classroom books and sources that enable students to see themselves represented in the text they read.

Muniz (2019-2020) points out that over time, several frameworks were developed for culturally responsive approaches and identifies Gloria Ladson-Billings (who is credited with coining the term culturally responsive teaching in the early 1990's), Geneva Gay, and Django Paris as early authors of seminal works.

Zarreta Hammond suggests that culturally responsive teaching needs to be distinguished from *multicultural education* and *social justice education*. She explains that it is focused on the cognitive development of under-served students, while multicultural and social justice education have more of a social supporting role. In her "Distinctions of Equity" framework, culturally responsive teaching focuses on improving the learning capacity of diverse students who have been marginalized educationally, multicultural education focuses on celebrating diversity, and social justice education focuses on exposing the social political context that students experience. (Hammond, 2020).

What is Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction?

Given Keys to Literacy's focus on providing professional development for the use of evidence-based instructional practices that increase student literacy achievement, part of the goal of this document is to provide suggestions for culturally responsive teaching that are specific to reading instruction. See the *Implications for Literacy Instruction* section at the end of this document for suggestions.

Who is culturally responsive teaching for?

Students in the United States come from a large and increasing number of racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse families. Zarreta Hammond explains,

> "The term *diverse* is really an attempt to talk about English language learners, immigrant students, students of color, be they African-American, Latino, Pacific Islander, Asian. Usually we are talking about lower performing students, for better or worse. It's a loaded term, but it's one folks are using to really talk about the students they are most worried about when they look at their data, because they are disproportionately at the bottom of the achievement curve." (Gonzalez interview of Hammond, 2017)

In a culturally responsive classroom, Muniz (2019-2020) explains that learners' varied identities and experiences are recognized, honored, and used to bridge rigorous new learning. She notes that Ladson-Billings' (1995) framework for culturally responsive teaching focused on African American students, but over time, scholars have expanded on that framework to address learners with other varying and intersecting identities, including based on social class, English proficiency, disability status, and LGBTQ status whose identities and experiences are likewise excluded from mainstream settings. She goes on to note that students benefit from seeing themselves in school and, "For these and other students, culturally responsive teaching provides critical 'windows' into the cultural heritage and experiences of others." (p. 11)

What does the research say about culturally responsive teaching?

Muniz (2019-2020) points out that compelling research highlights the benefits of culturally responsive teaching (citing Hammond, 2015; Tatum, 2006, 2009; Wood & Jucius, 2013; Morrison, Robbins, & Rose, 2008; Byrd, 2016; Aronson & Laughter, 2016). She explains,

> "Research illustrates that instructional materials, assignments, and texts that reflect students' backgrounds and experiences are critical to engagement and deep meaningful learning. A smaller, yet promising group of studies evaluating the effectiveness of culturally responsive teaching interventions link this approach to a wide range of positive outcomes such as academic achievement and persistence, improved attendance, greater interest in school, among other outcomes." (p. 10- 11)

She concludes that, though more rigorous, large-scale studies are needed, existing studies already support taking action to boost teachers' culturally responsive practice.

What can teachers do to move towards a more culturally responsive model of instruction?

Key tenets of culturally responsive teaching are listed and explained in the chart below.

Use an Assets-Based Approach

In an asset-based classroom, diversity in thinking, background, learning style, and culture are seen as positive and necessary. Differences are embraced as strengths, and culturally responsive teaching focuses on what students can do and what they each uniquely contribute to the class dynamic (Martinez, 2021). It includes the belief that all students have the same abilities and desires to learn, and students from historically underrepresented communities should be seen as an asset and not a deficit (Hollie, 2017). Muhammad (2020) suggests that literacy instruction, in addition to developing skills, should also support students' development of their own identities and the strengths they bring to the classroom.

Bridge School and the World of the Student

In many classrooms across the United States today, students represent a wide range of cultural origins, linguistic dialects and languages spoken at home, and social class background experiences. It is important for teachers to have positive perspectives on students and their parents and families. Teachers should recognize that students' home cultures and languages are assets for learning, and intentionally draw on them to shape curriculum, instruction, and classroom management. (Martinez, 2021)

Communicate High Expectations

Studies show that underserved English language learners, students of color, and students with socioeconomic disadvantages often receive less instruction to develop higher-order and critical-thinking skills than other students (Murphy & Torff, 2019; TNTP, 2018). Zaretta Hammond (2014) points out that when teachers do not have high expectations for students, they become dependent learners who tend to rely on teachers to guide them through complex tasks. Without the opportunity to develop the cognitive processes that enable complex thinking, students are less likely to gain the experience or skills to become independent learners. In an interview, Hammond asks,

> "How do we build the capacity of diverse students to have intellectual confidence and grow their brainpower? What that means is the focus of culturally responsive teaching is raising academic success, that's what Gloria Ladson-Billings had at the center of her work when she actually coined the term and started bringing various strands of educational theory and practice together. Culturally responsive teaching … really is about improving the academic achievement of students… Only the learner learns, so if you don't have the learner feeling confident in their intellectual ability and being able to leverage what he or she already knows in terms of taking in the content and making it usable knowledge, then you're not going to be able to accelerate that learning." (Gonzalez interview with Hammond, 2017).

Teachers should avoid making assumptions about a student's abilities. They should set rigorous learning objectives and all students should receive a consistent message that they are expected to attain high standards in their schoolwork. Teachers can do this by communicating clear and specific expectations of what students are expected to know and be able to do, and creating an environment in which there is a belief in their capability. Martinez (2021) notes,

> "High expectations signal to students that their teachers believe in them and their ability to learn. Students who meet high expectations gain self-esteem and develop a growth mindset, which is the understanding that learning and achievement come from effort and practice rather than inherited and fixed personal characteristics… teachers need to believe that their historically underrepresented students can master the same rigorous content as their dominant-culture peers."

Krasnoff (2016) explains,

> "Over time, low expectations not only hinder learning but also negatively affect students' attitudes and motivation, resulting in self- fulfilling prophecies. If they are to eliminate persistent disparities in student achievement, every educator must consciously and consistently demonstrate the same specific, observable, and measurable behaviors and practices to all students, regardless of the students' current academic performance." (p.4)

Teachers who have high expectations provide all students access to grade-level texts, tasks, and experiences, rather than limiting them to below-grade level texts or simplifying instruction (TPTN, 2018). Through modeling, clarification of challenging text, and scaffolding, teachers can help students at any reading level access rigorous text in order to develop high-level, critical thinking skills.

View Linguistic and Dialect Differences Positively

The linguistic differences that students bring with them to school should be viewed positively in classrooms and used as strengths to support literacy learning. Teachers should keep in mind that dialects of English are complex and rule-governed systems of English, no different than *Mainstream American English* (MAE). (Johnson, 2021)

Nonmainstream American English (NMAE) refers to a variety of dialects including African American English, Appalachian English, Caribbean English Creoles, Chicano/Latino English, Hawaiian Creole English, and Southern American English (Gatlin-Nash, Johnson, Lee-James, 2020).

Many speakers of NMAE are *bidialectal*, able to speak more than one dialect of English, and this linguistic flexibility to vary dialect use in different contexts or environments can be used as a strength. The instructional goal should not be to change a child's dialect, but to instead recognize that there are instructional implications related to dialect for students' knowledge of MAE as it relates to learning to read. (Johnson, 2021)

Teachers should avoid perceiving students who use NMAE as less capable than their peers who do not use NMAE, especially for dialects such as African American English (AAE) sometimes perceived as being of lower prestige.

Dialect Differences and Learning to Read

Students who use non-mainstream dialects may face challenges when learning to read, especially in the areas of oral language and phonological skills. Research demonstrates that in general, children who use a high frequency of NMAE dialect versus MAE tend to have lower literacy scores than their

peers who use no or very little NMAE. NMAE is tied to structural aspects of language and reading (i.e., phonology, morphology, syntax). For speakers of NMAE dialect, learning the alphabetic principle can be challenging because often, NMAE dialect differences do not map well onto the standard English writing system's orthography. Contrasts in the pronunciation of sounds and morphemes (e.g., suffixes) in words may also affect vocabulary development. Differences in morphology and syntax, coupled with phonological variations, can make comprehension more difficult. (Gatlin-Nash, Johnson, Lee-James, 2020)

Instructional Implications

Teachers should address the needs of students with dialect differences during early reading instruction when oral language skills form foundations upon which literacy skills develop. Teachers should talk explicitly with students about how most of us speak differently depending upon the context (e.g., home language versus school language) and with whom we are speaking. Doing so, in a positive light without criticism or invalidation of the students' home language, should help to decrease the stigmas often associated with being a speaker of NMAE. In addition to using evidence-based language and literacy programs, instruction practices can be used that help students become *bidialectal* by explicitly contrasting MAE and NMAE. Teachers benefit from professional development that increases their knowledge of the structures of dialects and the potential role of linguistic differences in learning to read. (Gatlin-Nash, Johnson, Lee-James, 2020)

Assessment Implications

It is important to recognize that typically developing children who speak NMAE often have a strong grasp of their primary dialect, but assessments do not always allow for this fact to be realized. Standardized measures of literacy skills often assess students' knowledge of MAE and may not accurately assess the language abilities of students who speak NMAE. For example, research indicates a tendency for students who use a greater amount of dialect in their speech to have lower scores on phonological awareness measures (Mitri & Terry, 2014). However, it should not be assumed that NMAE speakers lack phonological awareness based on traditional measures of phonological awareness that only tap into children's knowledge of MAE phonology. (Johnson, 2021)

Incorporate Culturally Diverse Curriculum and Instructional Practices

Inclusive practices consist of both curricular materials and teaching methods. Schools and educators should diversify curriculum so that it does not overemphasize the White, male, heterosexual, cisgender perspective (denoting or relating to a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their birth sex). This should be done by examining both explicit and implicit curricula. Explicit curricula are what we teach – the subjects and source material that we cover. Implicit curricula refer to the other aspects of what we teach inside or outside of the explicit curriculum, such as the images, music, and quotations used in the classroom. (Kubic, 2021)

When teaching practices are not inclusive, educators perpetuate system inequalities. Tricia Ebarvia developed eight questions to help educators reflect on their inclusive practices and curricula:

- How inclusive is the media you consume, personally and professionally?
- How inclusive is your curriculum?
- How inclusive is your classroom library?

- How inclusive are your mentor texts for writing?
- How often do you use gendered versus non-gendered language?
- How equitable are your class discussions? In what ways do you ensure that all student voices are heard?
- How often do you show (think aloud) inclusive thinking when discussing your decisions and responses to texts?
- In what ways – and how often – do you and your colleagues reflect on your practices to ensure all voices are recognized and respected?

Use Books That Enable Students to See Themselves

Students must see themselves represented in the text they read. This honors students' identities and helps them feel empowered in the classroom. They also need exposure to books that will help them understand the multicultural nature of the world they live in.

Rudine Sims Bishop (1990) coined the phrase *Windows, Mirrors, and Sliding Glass Doors* to explain how children see themselves in books and how they also learn about the lives of others through literature. Bishop explains,

> "Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author… A window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection, we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books." (p.1)

Stringfellow (2019) points out that seeing characters and experiences in literature that reflect their own personal lives can validate for students their worth and value at school and in society. Gholdy Muhammad (2021) points out that teachers have to ask what texts can help their students accomplish. She explains,

> "Texts should drive cognitive goals (skills and intellect) as well as critical analysis (criticality) and sociocultural goals (identity)… students must see themselves in the texts, including their cultures, identities, interests, experiences, desires, and future selves."

She suggests that when considering texts for classroom use, teachers ask themselves questions such as:
- Why did I choose this text to teach with?
- How have my students contributed to the selection of texts for teaching and learning?
- When the text provided by the school is not enough, how will I respond as a critical and equitable educator?
- How will this text advance my students' learning of the identity of themselves or other people/cultures?
- How will this text advance my students' learning of skills and advance their intellects?

- What are the backgrounds of the writer and illustrator of the text? Is there a stronger author I could use to bring students closer to the content?

One way to provide windows and mirrors for students is by building a robust classroom library of diverse titles that are used for read-aloud and student reading. Tricia Ebarvia developed the following questions to help educators consider an inclusive classroom library:

- How does your classroom library mirror your own reading preferences versus those of your students?
- Do you know which voices are represented on your bookshelves? Which voices are missing?
- In what ways do you include – and how do you find – "own voices" titles to add to your library? How are these voices integrated versus others in the way you organize or share titles?

Teachers should make use of resources that identify culturally responsive book titles (see the resource list on the last page of this document).

What are some overall suggestions for creating an equitable classroom climate?

Krasnoff (2016) points out that teachers must be intentional about eliminating bias and creating a culturally responsive classroom climate. Citing Morrison, Robbins and Rose (2008) and New York University (2008), Krasnoff identifies six strategies that teachers should implement to create an environment in which all children have equitable opportunities to learn (p. 16-17):

1. Teachers acknowledge their own biases and inequitable actions.
2. Teachers make an effort to learn about their students' cultural backgrounds.
3. Teachers examine curriculum and learning materials for bias.
4. Teachers build caring, cooperative classroom environments.
5. Teachers build relationships with families and communities.
6. Teachers identify curricular bias by looking for these practices:
   - Invisibility: Overlooking certain groups that implies they are less valuable or important.
   - Stereotyping: Limiting the opportunities for a certain group based on rigid perceptions of their ability or potential.
   - Imbalance or selectivity: Providing one viewpoint or selective information that leads to misinterpretation or an incomplete understanding of an event, situation, or group of people.
   - Fragmentation or isolation: Placing information about people of color, women, or other protected groups in a box or chapter that is separate from the main body of text.
   - Linguistic bias: Using masculine words such as *he* and *mankind* exclusively, or using patronizing terms such as *needy* or *less fortunate* to describe a group of people.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERACY INSTRUCTION

How can the tenets of culturally responsive teaching be applied specifically to reading instruction?

Culturally responsive teaching, including how it applies to teaching reading, cannot be deduced to a single routine, program or set of steps to follow. As the term implies, it should be based on the culture, language, and uniqueness of those you are teaching, "... shaped by the sociocultural characteristics of the settings in which [it occurs], and the populations for whom [it is] designed" (Gay, 2013, p. 63). With that said, the following suggestions for integrating culturally responsive teaching into literacy instruction are a starting point upon which educators can build. The suggestions are linked to specific reading instruction components.

Suggestions for All Reading Components	**Set and Communicate High Expectations for Developing and Using Reading Skills**
	Set rigorous literacy learning objectives and provide all students with a consistent message that they are expected to attain high standards related to reading. Do this by communicating clear and specific expectations of what students are expected to know and be able to do, and creating an environment in which there is a belief in their ability to become proficient readers. Providing the necessary modeling, clarification of reading tasks, and scaffolding, can help students acquire grade level (and beyond) reading skills.
	Provide Explicit Instruction of Literacy Skills and Use a Gradual Release of Responsibility Model
	In order to meet high literacy expectations, students need to develop grade-appropriate reading skills across all grades. Teachers should not assume that students will develop reading skills independently simply by being exposed to print or by being asked to read a lot. Explicit instruction is needed to develop skills for all reading components (phonemic awareness, phonics for decoding and spelling, fluency, vocabulary development, reading comprehension).
	Explicit instruction involves using structured and sequenced steps to teach a specific reading skill and a Gradual Release of Responsibility model of teaching, also known as an *I, We, You* approach (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983). At the first stage (I), the teacher presents a skill to students using modeling and think aloud. At the second stage (We), guided practice with feedback is provided to students. At the last stage (You), students practice the skill independently. Students require different amounts of practice and degrees of support in order to reach independent use.

	Select and Use Culturally Responsive Texts for Reading Instruction Students must see themselves in the text they read. Books that are used for read aloud and student reading should reflect multicultural experiences, providing *windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors* that validate for students their worth and value at school and in society. Students also need exposure to books that will help them understand the multicultural nature of the world they live in. A culturally responsive lens should be used when selecting text • for read aloud in the primary grades to develop oral language; • for wide reading to support growth in vocabulary; • for developing background knowledge to support comprehension; • to teach and practice comprehension strategies and skills; and • to be used as mentor text to develop writing skills.

Suggestions for:
 	
• Phonology
• Phonics
• Spelling
	Linguistic and Dialect Considerations
	
	Dialect awareness, the appreciation of the systematic differences between the standard and the vernacular form of a language, has been shown in research studies to be positively correlated with literacy outcomes. Thus, one can expect that improving students' dialect awareness improves their literacy outcomes. Teachers should be encouraged to help students develop this awareness through contrastive analysis (systematic comparison of two dialects), without value being placed on one dialect over another (Pittas and Nunes, 2018). Dialect awareness by teachers and students supports phonemic awareness and the development of phonics skills, as described below.
	
	Considerations for Phonology (Gatlin-Nash, Johnson, Lee-James, 2020)
	
	• It is important for teachers to be aware of phoneme differences between dialects when they are teaching students to produce phonemes. They should clearly enunciate individual phonemes in words, and call attention to contrasts between Mainstream American English (MAE) pronunciation and pronunciation in a student's primary dialect, being respectful of both dialects.
	
	    o Example: A common phonological feature of African American English (AAE) is the reduction of final consonant clusters ('h-a-n-d' as 'h-a-n').
	
	    o Example: In AAE /f/ and /v/ are often used in place of the /th/ sound in words ending in -th ('smooth' is pronounced 'smoov', 'bath' as 'baf'). When students encounter or write words that have the pattern -th they may not recognize or write the word correctly, as based on MAE.

- Dialect variation should be taken into account for phonological awareness assessment because traditional assessments often assess only knowledge of (MAE). Students may actually have a strong grasp of phonology in their primary dialect, but assessments given may not adequately assess that knowledge. Teachers should pay careful attention to the phonemes targeted by the assessment and take note of items that represent dialect contrasts.

Considerations for Phonics/Decoding

- The orthographic mapping process that builds on letter-sound knowledge and decoding skills is essential for the development of fluent readers. This process of mapping phonemes to the written structure of MAE may be impacted for speakers of Non Mainstream American English (NMAE) resulting in a longer learning process. Developing dialect awareness in students can support this process.

Considerations for Spelling (Gatlin-Nash, Johnson, Lee-James, 2020)

- NMAE dialect intrusions, where the dialect spoken by the student and MAE differ, has been shown to affect spelling. Teachers should help students recognize the difference between how words are spelled and how words are pronounced, especially for graphemes (letters) that represent sounds not always said or heard in a student's dialect.
  - Example: A common feature of AAE and Southern American English (SAE) dialects is *vowel shifting* ('think' becomes 'thank').

  - Example: Treiman, Coswami, Tincoff, and Leevers (1997) found that native English speakers who tend not to pronounce the phoneme /r/ in certain phonological contexts produce more "r" related spelling errors than native speakers who do pronounce the /r/.

Linguistic Considerations for English Language Learners (ELLs)

Some languages have different spoken phonemes than those used in English. When teaching English language learners, teachers need to be mindful of these differences and provide additional instruction and support when modeling or asking students to produce phonemes or teaching letter-sound correspondences. For students who have already learned phonics for a first language that has different letter-sound correspondences, teachers need to provide explicit instruction and practice to help students learn the new correspondences.

Note: A helpful resource for contrastive analysis of dialects and languages with MAE can be found at the ASHA website.

Suggestions for:	**Linguistic and Dialect Considerations**
• Fluency	Teachers should be aware that NMAE dialects may impact fluency development. Correlational studies (Craig et al., 2004) have shown that reading accuracy and rate are adversely related to the frequency of dialect related intrusions in passage reading. Also, dialect awareness has been found to be a strong predictor in reading and in morphological spelling (Pittas and Nunes, 2018). Therefore, teachers should provide instruction that helps students become *bidialectal*, i.e., proficient and fluent while reading in two dialects of the same language such as English.
Suggestions for:	**Linguistic and Dialect Considerations**
• Vocabulary • Morphology	There is a strong relationship between oral language development, especially vocabulary, and learning to read and write. Because some students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have limited exposure to MAE prior to entering school, it is essential for teachers to provide high-quality instruction that can accelerate vocabulary growth. Awareness of Phoneme and Morpheme Variations: (Gatlin-Nash, Johnson, Lee-James, 2020) • Different pronunciation of morphemes and phonemes in words may affect the ability to learn the meanings of new words. o Example: The AAE and SAE common features of 'g' dropping for the suffix -ing and vowel shifting can cause confusion about word meaning. For example, if a student pronounces the word 'string' as 'strain' the student may come to believe that the word 'strain' means *a slender cord* (incorrect) rather than *to exert or pull to the fullest* (correct). • When teaching vocabulary, teachers should teach words in context and make sure that students are aware of all features of a word – its spelling, pronunciation of its phonemes, its word parts (morphemes), multiple meanings, and related words. **Increasing Knowledge of Academic Vocabulary** Teachers should be aware that some students, including those who are English language learners, may have limited knowledge of academic vocabulary that is typically used only in school. • Wood and colleagues (2021) note, "…We cannot assume that all students have equitable or sufficient opportunities to acquire English academic words or that the sociocultural relevance of academic words is comparable across students from diverse cultural and

	linguistic backgrounds" (p.283). Citing findings from multiple intervention studies, they suggest robust vocabulary instruction includes approaches that
	
	  o emphasize morphological problem solving to deduce word meanings;
	  o include multiple exposures to targets; and
	  o integrate explanation of word meanings within meaningful contexts.

Suggestions for:
 	
• Syntax
• Reading Comprehension
• Discussion About Text
	Linguistic and Dialect Considerations
	
	Dialect Awareness
	
	Combined differences in morphology and syntax, coupled with phonological differences, can make comprehension in general more difficult for speakers of NMAE; improving students' dialect awareness has been found to improve their literacy outcomes (Gatlin-Nash, Johnson, Lee-James, 2020). Therefore, teachers should provide instruction that helps students become bidialectal
	
	Syntactic Awareness
	
	Unfortunately, dialect features related to syntax have traditionally been criticized or considered grammatical errors. However, teachers should keep in mind that dialects of English are complex and rule-governed systems of English, no different than (MAE). (Johnson, 2021; Gatlin-Nash, Johnson, Lee-James, 2020)
	
	• Students benefit from explicit instruction for developing syntactic awareness that respects students' home languages while drawing attention to the differences between informal dialect and MAE.
	
	  o Example: Common features of AAE and SAE are variance in subject-verb agreement, deletion of the possessive 's', and the deletion of helping verbs such as 'has' and 'have'.
	    ▪ 'They were hungry.' (MAE) versus 'They was hungry.'(NMAE)
	    ▪ 'We went to Sam's house.' (MAE) versus 'We went to Sam house.' (NMAE)
	    ▪ 'He has been outside.' (MAE) versus "He been outside.' (NMAE)
	
	• Students benefit from explicit instruction that develops syntactic awareness using activities such as sentence combining (Graham & Perin, 2007), and also includes helping them become bidialectal.

Supporting High Learning Expectations: Teaching Comprehension Strategies to Support Critical Thinking

Students benefit from instruction that develops higher-order and critical thinking skills that are necessary to meet high expectations for learning. In order for students to become independent thinkers and learners, they need to develop metacognitive reading comprehension strategies and close reading skills. Instruction for these skills and strategies enable students to monitor their understanding while reading, identify when they are not comprehending, and respond by applying *fix-it* comprehension strategies.

Research findings show that explicit instruction of comprehension strategies helps all students, and especially those who have difficulty with reading comprehension. Comprehension strategies include summarization, use of graphic organizers, question generation and answering, and writing notes about text. (National Reading Panel, 2000; Kamil et al., 2008; Graham & Hebert, 2010)

Cultural Awareness Related to Classroom Participation and Discussion About Text

Students benefit from culturally relevant opportunities to respond to what they are reading and learning, including participation in classroom conversations and discussion with teachers and peers. Based on a research meta-analysis, Kamil and colleagues (2008) identified four recommendations for engaging students in high-quality discussions of text meaning and interpretation:
- Carefully prepare for the discussion.
- Ask follow up questions that help provide continuity and extend the discussion.
- Provide a task, or a discussion format, that students can follow when they discuss texts together in small groups.
- Develop and practice the use of a specific "discussion protocol."

Participation, as well as feeling valued and included, can be challenging for students whose preferred communication style differs from those typically used in the classroom. Teachers should become familiar with their students' communication styles, including those most commonly utilized in the cultures represented by the students. The IRIS Center (2021) suggests that culturally responsive teachers recognize and understand that some groups of students are accustomed to communicating through

- dramatic presentation;
- conversational and active participatory discourse;
- gestures and body movement;
- rapidly paced rhythmic speech; and
- metaphorical imagery.

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Resources for Culturally Responsive Books

Note: Keys to Literacy does not specifically endorse any of the books that are listed in any of the following resources.

Suggestions for Selecting Books

Cultivating Genius: How to Select Culturally and Historically Responsive Text. By Gholdy Muhammad. (2021) Scholastic. https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/teaching-tools/articles/professional-development/cultivating-genius-how-select-culturally-historically-responsive-text.html?eml=TCH%2Fsmd%2F20200812%2FFB%2FBTS%2FCultivatingGenius

Guide for Selecting Anti-Bias Children's Books. By Louise Derman-Sparks. Social Justice Books. https://socialjusticebooks.org/guide-for-selecting-anti-bias-childrens-books/

Reading Diversity: A Tool for Selecting Diverse Texts. (2015) Teaching Tolerance – A Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. https://docplayer.net/19406081-Reading-diversity-teaching-tolerance-a-tool-for-selecting-diverse-texts-extended-edition-complexity-critical-literacy-diversity-and-representation.html

Steps to Authenticity by Sharroky Hollie. (2019) *Literacy Now* blog post, International Literacy Association. https://www.literacyworldwide.org/blog/literacy-now/2019/05/22/steps-to-authenticity

Lists of Culturally Responsive Teaching Books

Brightly – Raise Kids Who Love to Read: 7 Books That Teach Kids About the Fluidity of Gender and the Importance of Acceptance. https://www.readbrightly.com/8-books-that-teach-kids-about-the-fluidity-of-gender-and-the-importance-of-acceptance/

The Diverse Books Project at AdLit.org https://www.adlit.org/books-and.../diverse-books-project

Edutopia: 22 Diverse Book Choices for All Grade Levels. https://www.edutopia.org/article/22-diverse-book-choices-all-grade-levels

Embrace Race: 20 Picture Books for 2020 – Readings to Embrace Race, Provide Solace, & Do Good. https://www.embracerace.org/resources/20-picture-books-for-2020

Goodreads: Children's Books About Gender Identity. https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/128564.Children_s_Books_About_Gender_Identity

Here We Read- The Ultimate 2018 List of Diverse Children's Books https://hereweeread.com/2017/11/2018-ultimate-list-diverse-childrens-books.html

Maya's Book Nook: Promoting Language and Literacy Skills Through Diverse Children's Literature. https://mayasbooknook.com/category/beyond-the-book/

Mrs. D's Corner: 60 Books About Disabilities and Differences for Kids. https://www.mrsdscorner.com/60disabilitybooksforkids/#google_vignette

Read Across America: Books by Theme (Lists from NEA and Colorin Colorado to connect children and their families to diverse books, languages, and cultures). https://www.nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/read-across-america/support-your-readers/books-by-theme

WNDB (We Need Diverse Books): Resources for race, equity, anti-racism, and inclusion: Book Recommendations. https://diversebooks.org/resources-for-race-equity-and-inclusion/