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# Benefits of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy for In-Service Educators

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## **Abstract**

There is a plethora of different teaching styles, all grouped under an umbrella term of pedagogy. This capstone focuses on the advantages in specifically incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy into the classroom. This method of pedagogy provides an inclusive environment in which students are able share their culture, as well as personal experiences to add to the overall academic achievement. By straying away from traditional teaching styles, in service educators are able to create a space for students to embrace their unique differences and incorporate inclusivity into learning. This integral approach provides real life experiences that have a qualitative depth that are unable to be taught through traditional instruction provided by textbooks. My findings will show a variety of interviews from in-service educators, as well as responses from questionnaires that were completed by current students. Culturally responsive pedagogy is an intrinsic approach that would contribute to the overall student academic success.

## Introduction & Background

Culturally responsive pedagogy is defined as a strategic teaching strategy in which students' customs, characteristics, experience, and perspectives are used as tools for better classroom instruction. With traditional teaching methods, education is seen as an environment that takes place between four walls and relies heavily on textbook resources; students are also solely reliant on the educators' guidance for instruction. In the 1990's, Gloria Ladson Billings (1995) felt that teaching should stem from a framework but should result in an environment where students are able to culturally thrive while being academically successful. "Culturally responsive pedagogy is a student-centered approach to teaching that includes cultural references and recognizes the importance of students' cultural backgrounds and experiences in all aspects of learning" (p. 1). There is value in creating spaces in which educators can reflect on their teaching practices in an unbiased manner to create the best learning environment for their students. As we evolve in our pedagogical methods, educators can incorporate more into the curriculum than just soft skills and state standards. Education is about teaching the students the desired skills for their course work, while also allowing students to grow into strong, open-minded individuals. With culturally responsive pedagogy, educators can bring awareness to themselves as well as their students, which allows for a safer, more successful inclusive classroom. Teaching a student life skills through their required academic work is a skill that will stay with them for a lifetime.

To be culturally responsive, educators must have a sense of flexible instruction. This is important because educators are able to create boundaries for their students, but also allow them the freedom to share their thoughts and guide their curiosities for learning. In order to use an individual's unique characteristics and experiences to create perspective, there must be resources in the classroom to encourage inclusivity in the classroom. "Further exploring the idea of enhanced engagement, it is emphasized that there is a need to tailor learning to students' interests by incorporating various cultures into the curriculum and designing lessons that are inclusive, representative, celebrate diversity, and encourage questions about difference" (Samuels, 2018, p. 28). When these skills become a class norm, students are known to practice their awareness and acceptance of cultural differences in daily life, and not strictly in the classroom.

I am interested in culturally responsive pedagogy because I view it as much more than just a teaching style, it is when an individual is knowledgeable and capable of engaging with others. Cultural responsiveness is a cultural asset that can be used more than just in a

classroom setting. Often times educators may have the best interest in mind for their students, but they are not fully aware of the diversity at hand. “A common concern is ‘good teachers’ with ‘good intentions’ often miss the mark and fall into patterns of the misappropriation of culturally responsive pedagogy” (Allen, Evans, & Turner, 2020, p. 53). In order to be entirely beneficial and respectful, educators must have the resources to be fully aware of historical events and how to address the details with their students. As an educator, it is expected to lead by example, which is why they are expected to avoid errors in cultural knowledge, social expectations, and language practices.

As a future educator, I have noticed a shift in teaching styles and it is not so “black and white” as they say. There is a significant amount of gray area in which students deserve more to their education. As we continue to expand on our educational resources, it is important to address topics that are more relevant in present day. I have observed that my peers are not as aware of cultural differences and the advantage of inclusive classroom environments. Culturally responsive pedagogy is a tool that educators can use in order to stray away from traditional teaching styles. It gives educators an opportunity to help their students grow as students, as well as individuals. This style of teaching allows for students to grow a sense of respect for themselves as well as others. They not only will be able to complete their core subjects with academic success, but they will learn life skills as well. This paper will explain the process of incorporating these ideas into a classroom. There will be a synthesis of data that has been collected that explains the process for all classrooms, or all age groups, all around the world. It will be beneficial for current in-service educators who are interested in a more progressive teaching style, and will provide data that can support these integrations for student success.

I have been fortunate enough to have a few educators in my college experience here at Cal State Monterey Bay that have incorporated a more modern approach to teaching. By creating a strong framework for their classroom, they have created a safe space for students to share their unique and individual thoughts. It has allowed for discussion and shaped the minds of young adults for the better. As I complete my time here at CSUMB and I am looking towards my future, I wanted to look deeper into the resources and pathways for in-service educators for creating their personal teaching style. My primary research question is: How does culturally responsive pedagogy benefit in-service educators? My secondary related questions are: What is culturally responsive pedagogy? When and how did it come about? Why has it become necessary for

in-service educators to know about the pedagogy? What does research say about the benefits of culturally responsive pedagogy for educators? How do teachers implement culturally responsive pedagogy in the classrooms? How do teachers know that culturally responsive pedagogy helps themselves in teaching students? Are there resources available for in-service educators who want to learn about culturally responsive pedagogy for implementation in the classrooms? Is there funding available for professional development for teachers?

### **Literature Review**

There is a significant amount of benefits to culturally responsive pedagogy. If educators were more open to exploring difficult topics for educational purposes, they would be able to relay the information to their students more effectively. This would also allow students to have awareness of their own culture, and be more open to expressing their unique differences in the classroom. Exposure to all different cultures and backgrounds should be welcomed rather than avoided. In order for educators to be successful in incorporating these ideas into the classroom, they must begin the chain of inclusivity and acceptance.

“This includes not only treating students of diverse ethnicities, abilities, religions, and gender identifications equally, as we are taught to do in our sensitivity trainings, but also treating students of all cultural linguistic backgrounds and socio-economic strata equally. This is the equity “regardless of financial, academic, educational or physical challenges” (Biondi, 2021, pg 31).

With that being said, it is crucial for educators to be provided with resources and training that can show them the importance of incorporating this into their classroom. There are many different techniques to creating a culturally responsive classroom environment, but they all consist of similar strategies. Each educator has their own personal characteristics and skills that can benefit a classroom and their students, it all depends on how they chose to approach their curriculum. This literature review will be split into four categories in order to synthesize the findings of my extensive research. I will first begin with the history of culturally responsive pedagogy. I will follow with the decline of success in academics due to traditional pathways, which has left educators to search for new and improved methods, such as culturally responsive pedagogy. Then there will be information regarding the benefits of culturally responsive

pedagogy. Lastly, there will be information on how to incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy into the classroom.

### **History of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

As teachers began to feel ill-equipped for the ever changing aspects of teaching, the question of creating a newer method of teacher was addressed. Culturally responsive pedagogy was introduced by scholar Gloria Ladson Billings in the 1900's. Another important figure would be Geneva Gay, who was pivotal for culturally responsive curriculum development. As traditions change for commonly used teaching styles, Zaffini (2022) states that “teachers often feel unprepared to teach in diverse settings, and many do not look to teach in settings they are unaccustomed to” p. 2). This often leads to a large group of in-service educators who hasten their years of teaching and find themselves in settings different from their own experiences. This leads to educators who are unaware of many aspects that are associated with education, and would require culturally responsive teaching. This lead to the expose of this new teaching style across the world, which world be able to accommodate some of the cultural issues in the classroom.

“To solve different issues faced by diverse students, educational leaders should be equipped with the knowledge and skills enabling them to recognize, honor, and incorporate the abilities of diverse students” (Rulinda, Jones, Wattam, & Thompson, 2022, p 4).

As time went on, it became clear that in order to provide each student an equal opportunity for learning, there would need to be changes to the curriculum. In-service educators began research and browse case studies, some schools even worked to change the entire presentation of curriculum to reflect a culturally responsive instruction. Narine Jones, and Dawidowicz (2022) revealed that “culturally responsive pedagogical practices symbolize school ethos in student teacher interactions, students' preconceptions, values, and goals as a vital part of positive school multicultural environments” (p. 2). As in-service educators became more aware of what culturally responsive pedagogy was, there was a significant amount of interested on what it entailed, and how to have classroom management tactics that fall under this category of pedagogy.

## **Decline of success in Academics due to Traditional Pedagogy**

In-service educators that are unaware of the modern teaching strategies are at large. The reason for this would be because they do not have access to recent training or revised teaching strategies. An educator may not be aware of recent ideas that should be incorporated into the curriculum, due to this, students are missing out on educational opportunities. Another issue would be if an educator is unprepared for change in their classroom, it can be detrimental to the students if they are not educated correctly on ways to incorporate these ideas. When an individual has the best intentions, but an insensitive or inaccurate way of expressing the lessons, it can be detrimental to the student. Another issue though would be for pre-service educators who are ready to integrate into the school systems, but they are unaware of the problems ahead. “Teacher education programs diminish what it means to be culturally responsive when pre-service teachers are not adequately prepared to interrogate oppressive systems”. (Allen, Evans, & Turner, 2020, p 60). Due to traditional practices and teaching styles, students are unprepared to face serious issues and they deserve to be introduced to navigating diversity. The reason that many researchers and in-service educators have become so adamant on incorporating these ideas into classrooms is due to the large amounts of diversity and culture that is apparent in most classrooms. “Students will not achieve academically if they are taught a watered down curriculum, or taught a curriculum where they do not see themselves reflected in the curriculum” (Mensah, 2021, p 12). It is known that if a student feels that they are alienated, or they do not feel that the curriculum is related to their personal needs, their academic achievement will diminish. As we continue to grow with our knowledge of education, we can see that traditional pathways are not as effective for uplifting cultural, ethnic and racial backgrounds.

## **Benefits of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy**

Due to the current limitations of traditional teaching styles, it has been common for educational institutions to address the benefits of incorporating culturally responsive pedagogy. When determining if it is the right pathway for an educator, they must have the correct resources and professional development to determine if the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. When



looking at educators of all grade levels and forms of curriculum, there is strong evidence to support the overall success of the students. At the beginning stages of required education, in-service educators are focused on providing students with the basic foundation of skills. This means they are learning skills such as counting, the alphabet, reading, etc. They are also required to have basic motor skills, it is the beginning of their overall development. As education continues, it is not as necessary for educators to focus on individuals and the importance of their personal identity development. Culturally responsive pedagogy supports the development of personal development skills.

“Socio-emotional learning in school improves a child’s competencies with regards to social and emotional development, as well as helping with “self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making” (Alhosani, 2022, p. 286).

The framework of kindergarten curriculum adopts the uniqueness of children laying the foundation for their cultural identity. With culturally responsive pedagogy, it is crucial for the educators to have a deeper understanding of their students cultures. In order to create an environment for the children to thrive and grow to be strong individuals, they must be aware and proud of their unique differences. Culturally responsive pedagogy is when educators encourage students to find and use their strengths, this provides a close knit community for their students and allows them to grow and thrive to their full potential.

We can see that in traditional teaching framework, when students reach a certain age they are expected to have base knowledge that an educator can build off. Yet, with culturally responsive pedagogy, an educator will continue to build these skills by observing what students need in order to succeed. “One of the most basic ways to create a sense of positivity and security in the classroom is to make a conscious effort to treat each student equally” (Biondi, 2021, p. 30). In this specific study, the focus is on college students, yet the needs of these individuals are the same. They need an educator who can create a desire for learning with each individual. When students are taught to respect themselves and others, they are more likely to have a positive connection to education and learning. This allows each student to feel that they have a fair chance of education, no matter what their personal situation is. All educators have a responsibility to the institution that they are teaching at, which may cause them to feel the need to focus on policy, procedures, schedules and deadlines. Yet, when taking a step back, they

would be able to adhere to the students needs and create a curriculum that meets every individual's needs.

### **How to Incorporate Culturally Responsive Pedagogy into the Classroom**

In order to address the needs of the students, it is crucial to address the needs of faculty development for in-service educators. In order to be intentional with their deliverance of academic information, they must know how to create a balance of curriculum, life skills, and cultural understanding. When creating a curriculum, sustainability is essential.

“Efforts to increase awareness of their teacher identities as they proceed through education programs requires acknowledging beliefs that all students can succeed and preparing lessons for students to learn how to navigate social, cultural, and historical contexts in diverse school environments.” (Samuels & Cook, 2017, p 51).

Every educator will have a different and unique experience, which is the beauty of the profession. Flexibility is important to create the best learning pathway for students. When an educator is able to prepare a lesson that can respectfully navigate tough topics while also being informative, students will benefit in the end.

### **Method and Procedures**

In the beginning of the semester, I was unsure of what topic I wanted to delve deeper into. After a small amount of time in the classes that I was enrolled in this semester, I was intrigued by the somewhat unconventional teaching styles that a few of my in-service educators had. I realized that there was something unique about the format they had chosen, and as a soon to be in-service educator, I was inspired. After speaking to both of my professors, I was able to have a deeper understanding of the umbrella term that is pedagogy. There are many different types of pedagogy, often times they have specific titles, but many are seen to be interchangeable. I soon realized that a culturally respectful, and inclusive classroom format actually had a title, and that is culturally responsive pedagogy. Although this is not the case for every individual, I always felt more comfortable when the educator created a classroom environment that encouraged differences in each individual. I preferred when a classroom felt connected in a

personal manner and we were able to have a discussion based format where we could learn not only from the educator's provided material, but also from each other. With that being said, I wanted to understand how culturally responsive pedagogy benefitted a teacher in regards to how they educated their students. To seek for the answers to my research questions, I completed a deep dive into the peer-reviewed research journals that gave me a deeper understanding of my research questions. I completed two in-service educator interviews that gave specific feedback on their experiences with their pedagogy. Lastly, I was able to create questionnaires that their students, and my peers, could anonymously complete as a self report on their experience in the classroom as well.

In order to understand if culturally responsive pedagogy was beneficial as a teaching strategy, I knew that I needed to understand pedagogy as a whole. I specifically interviewed two of my current professors here at Cal State University Monterey Bay so that I could understand why they chose their teaching methods. These two professors were the individuals who inspired my Capstone Project, and they were enthusiastic to share about the benefits as well as challenges of their pedagogy, since every teaching style has their own. (See Appendix 1 for the Interview Questions for Professors).

I also wanted to understand how a variety of students responded to these unique teaching styles. It is important to understand that not every student learns the same, and constructive criticism is crucial to improve and support all individuals. I sent a short questionnaire to all the students in both classes. There were 27 students in one of the courses, and 15 in the other course. Their responses were completely anonymous and their participation was voluntary, so it was as authentic as possible. (See Appendix 2 Interview Questions for Students) It was beneficial to complete these surveys online so that students had easy access to the survey and they were able to complete at their sole discretion. Having the internet as a tool for the research portion of my data was incredibly helpful. By the end of the research portion of my project, I was able to have 21 responses to my survey, which allowed me to begin formulating my results to my primary and secondary research questions.

## Results and Discussion

Throughout my research, I have been able to have a much better understanding of culturally relevant pedagogy and how attainable it is to achieve in a classroom setting. I have been able to answer many questions that would help guide an individual to choose a certain teaching method.

### 1. What is culturally responsive pedagogy? When and how did it come about?

To sum up culturally responsive pedagogy, this method of teaching would be divided into two categories: institutional and personal. Essentially, as an educator, you have a role in the development of your student in regards to their academics. Yet, culturally responsive pedagogy goes one step further than traditional milestones an individual must meet to complete their requirements in the classroom. It also focuses on creating a space in which the students are able to share their personal experiences and culture in order to bring depth to the classroom. When an instructor is able to create an environment where every student's personal needs feel acknowledged, they are much more likely to succeed. Not only are they able to express and expand their knowledge of their personal characteristics, but they are able to understand inclusivity. This brings them the academic skills, as well as the life skills that they will be able to use for a lifetime. The idea of culturally responsive pedagogy first became well known due to Gloria Jean Ladson-Billings. She is an American pedagogical theorist and teacher educator, who completed extensive work in the fields of culturally responsive pedagogy and critical race theory. Although these ideas were already present, she was able to provide informative connections between systemic racism and economic inequality on educational opportunities.

### 2. Why has it become necessary for in-service educators to know about the pedagogy? What does research say about the benefits of culturally responsive pedagogy for educators?

As we continue to evolve as individuals, we can see that many more difficult topics are occurring. Current in-service educators may have only received dated training and educational systems that have not prepared them for the current day issues that must be addressed. As we tackle more pertinent conversations, we are not educated in the most respected way to speak about said issues. "Culturally responsive teaching uses cultural knowledge, prior experiences,

frames of reference, performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more practical and relevant in the classroom” (Gay, 2018, p 29). During an interview with a professor who is currently studying culturally responsive pedagogy, Professor B stated that, “One thing I have to share to help one understand what I see as ‘genuine’ culturally responsive pedagogy includes the innate desire to emphasize. This is something that I feel workshops/trainings/seminars cannot teach. It has to come from within to achieve an authentic and holistic concern for others wellbeing”. (Professor B, personal communication, March 20, 2023). This quote that was shared explains that education is so much more than just learning the facts. There is a deeper aspect of education that involves a genuine care for others. In order to truly understand the information in a classroom, the educator must teach the required information, as well as the life skills of sincerity. A truly inclusive and culturally respectful classroom would include an educator who can teach the students the life skills that they will use simultaneously with the educational facts.

3. How do teachers implement culturally responsive pedagogy in the classrooms?  
How do teachers know that culturally responsive pedagogy helps themselves in teaching students?

There was an overwhelming amount of data that expressed the need for staff development. In order to shape the young minds to exercise inclusivity, the educators must be aware of the critical steps to ensure success in the classroom. Often times, “While participants considered facilitation of culturally responsive teaching beneficial in a multitude of areas, restraints of time and resources were heavily emphasized. (Cook, Samuels, & Samuels, 2018, p 24). Many educators are enthusiastic about educating themselves on what it means to be culturally responsive in a classroom. They want inclusivity to be a framework and an expectation in their classroom, but in lower income classrooms, challenges arise. Educators felt that there is not enough consistent information that would educate them to make a complete switch to their pedagogy. Yet, it was clear that if provided with free seminars that they could voluntarily join, they were much more open to the idea of professional development. The idea of inclusivity and being culturally responsive is a community effort, and it requires a mutual respect for the idea and a desire to learn.

When looking into the personal data that I collected from questionnaires from peers that are enrolled in the courses taught by the in-service educators I interviewed, I was able to see a overall consensus of admiration for their in service educators teaching styles. (See Appendix B for student survey), 95% of students enjoyed the teaching style of their professor. When questioned about their comfort sharing in class, 91% felt that their thoughts were valued and that they could share aloud. This was surprising, as many students prefer to observe and not participate during a discussion. According to the data, 90% of the students felt that their instructor specifically made their thoughts feel important, which encouraged them to participate more. In regards to the teaching style of their professors, 80% felt that they were developing academically. This data would provide the educators with the incite needed to support that their unique teaching style was bringing academic success to their students. The highest statistic from the survey would be that 96% of students felt there was a strong sense of inclusivity and community in their classroom. Culturally responsive pedagogy is mainly known as a teaching style that was created for this main goal. It is clear, that a majority of students feel that this is beneficial for their learning. Lastly, 85% felt that their in-service educator has created a successful learning environment. This shows that if an educator has the correct resources for professional development, they have the opportunity to have a inclusive, interactive, and culturally responsive classroom.

#### 4. How do in-service educators know that culturally responsive pedagogy helps themselves in teaching students?

Since culturally responsive pedagogy is known to be a newer idea that is being proposed for classrooms, there are many debates on how to measure if a student is showing improvement. Without having traditional lecture slides pulled from the textbook, followed by a test, many educators do not know how to support a different grading system. During the interview, an in-service educator states, “This teaching style can easily be misconstrued for leniency. When one is undisciplined it can be hard to keep oneself on track and this can pose lack of success for some students. I can say that this percentage is low compared to those that thrive and are successful in my classes.” (Professor B, personal communication, March 20, 2023). There are advantages and disadvantages to every teaching method, which is why it is important to understand potential issues that could arise with student success. Often times, students feel that

educators are simply there to give them a grade. Yet, with this teaching style, it allows for the student and the educator to form an open-conversation that can provide clarity in what each individual's needs from each other. The reason why culturally responsive pedagogy has been seen to be so productive and successful is due to the increased engagement and therefore success with the majority of students. Gloria Ladson Billings states,

“The culturally responsive teachers encouraged a community of learners rather than competitive, individual achievement. By demanding a higher level of academic success for the entire class, individual success did not suffer.” (Ladson Billings, 1995, p 480)

Children often feel that they are being compared in education, as the smartest, or the ones who struggle. Yet, with this form of instruction, they will see that their personal input is just as important and beneficial to the overall topic. When students feel that they have the support system to succeed, they will be more likely to participate in their studies. This has a direct correlation to retention of information and overall success in their academics. They will also learn essential tools with their social skills, empathy and critical thinking skills.

5. Are there resources available for in-service educators who want to learn about culturally responsive pedagogy for implementation in the classrooms? Is there funding available for professional development for teachers?

In order to improve a classroom and adhere to a culturally responsive pedagogy, there must be a few steps to achieve this goal. An educator must be entirely committed to learning about a new pedagogy. “Since there continues to be a lack of congruence between classroom practice and strategies essential for authentic and effective culturally responsive pedagogy, teachers should be encouraged to embrace the recommendation of critical multiculturalism and begin with self reflection and examination” (Cook, Samuels, & Samuels, 2018, p 29). Once they are able to embrace an open-mind and seek to educate themselves, they will be encouraged to take a step further and educate their students as well. As culturally responsive pedagogy becomes more well-known and desired, specific frameworks are being created in order to understand developmental needs to change overall curriculum.

“All the participants acknowledged cultural responsiveness as important for curriculum implementation and they tailored it to allow the school population to associate it with the lessons being taught in the

classroom. It was important that participants identified situational cultural responses whereby they addressed issues in and out of the classroom and shaped curriculum cultural responsiveness accordingly.” (Samuels, 2018, p 29).

Essentially there are resources available that show the correct pathway to incorporate a culturally responsive approach to the already in place curriculum and required material. While also reflecting on the conversation I had during an in-service educator interview, I could see that there was a genuine interest in professional development, but many roadblocks that stood in the way. “Culturally responsive teaching is not yet mainstream. My cohort and I (4 lecturers) have been tirelessly working to change this campus wide. We feel this teaching style is something that needs to be integrated across the disciplines and unfortunately, there is not funding for it.” (Professor A, personal communication, April 15, 2023). As we continue to expand on the capabilities that we have to educate, it is apparent that there should be funding set aside in order to provide the necessary professional development for in-service educators.

### **Problems and Limitations**

Although I was able to obtain the data that I needed in the end, it was a bit difficult to receive interest in a voluntary survey. The classes that I chose to receive the survey also did not have many individuals enrolled so there was not as much data as I would have liked to have. I also struggled to find time to interview the professors about the topic of culturally responsive pedagogy due to their limited time constraints. While completing the literature review it was apparent that this topic is much more common for youth education, which meant there was not a significant amount of information for adolescent and adult educators. With that being said, I was eager to receive the feedback from my peers on their preferred instructional methods at a collegiate level.

I would have liked to interview more in- service educators. It would be beneficial to also integrate the local school systems to see how educators feel about the resources they have, and what their methods are to create inclusivity in their classrooms. I also would have found value in interviewing more students to see if they feel that their individual needs are being addressed. Overall, this was a great experience and I look forward to expanding on the idea of culturally responsive pedagogy in the future.



## **Recommendations**

Personally, I feel that being educated on inclusivity and how racial injustices effect our youth is essential. In order for our school systems to create a safer, more successful environment, culturally responsive pedagogy should be incorporated into curriculum as much as possible. I want to emphasize that there is still value in traditional teaching styles, but it would be helpful to have specific aspects of this newer methodology slowly incorporated into all curriculum. Students prefer to have a sense of community when learning, feeling a sense of comfort allows them the best environment to learn. Exams and lectures may be an aspect of education that will be used in the foreseeable future, but that does not mean that it must be the only intended form of instruction. Creating a discussion based, culturally respective classroom encourages individuality and critical thinking skills. Often times, school consists of students that recapitulate facts, but they do not have a genuine understanding of the material. With culturally responsive pedagogy, it is possible to have academic achievement as well as individual development. In order to teach our youth perspective, educators must have a deep understanding of culture and the importance of inclusivity. In order for students to be aware of these ideas, it begins with the professional development that educators will be receiving. I believe that in-service educators should have access to resources that could allow them the guidance to create a culturally responsive framework in their teaching. There is a plethora of scholastic journals and books that give in depth results on how to transform a classroom environment. In-service educators should not be required to change their means of instruction entirely, but should be aware of how incorporations of culturally responsive educational practices would improve the academic success of their students.

## **Conclusion**

This paper focused on the question, what are the benefits of culturally responsive pedagogy for in-service educators? From research, the desire for in-service educators to redefine traditional education and ensure that students are individually developed. Culturally responsive

pedagogy is a student-centered approach that requires empathy, patience and inclusivity in order for learning to occur. This teaching provides a framework in which children are not only developing academically, but creating a sense of identity and belonging alongside their peers.

According to a current in service educator, “ My goal is to empower students to feel freedom in the classroom to navigate it the way they want to, and take the pieces of information that they need for personal success and advocate for the tools they need.” (Professor A, personal communication, April 15, 2023) This teaching style allows for every individual student to be heard and valued, they feel comfortable sharing experiences involving difficult conversations that would allow for personal growth. For education to continue to grow and adapt to the needs of the students to come, in-service educators must be open to adapting as well to create the spaces to encourage critical thinking.

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## Appendix A

### Professor 1: Interview Questions/ Answers: April 15, 2023

1. What is culturally responsive pedagogy in your own words?

Although I do not feel that my teaching style is categorized as culturally responsive pedagogy, it is under a similar umbrella term. The purpose of education is to meet students half way. I want students to critically analyze education so that they have the tools to continue to learn. A typical college lecture does not necessarily give students that practice. It may be interesting and informative, but education should be a step further than that.

2. What do you consider to be your teaching style?

My goal is to empower students to feel freedom in the classroom to navigate it the way they want to, and take the pieces of information that they need for personal success and advocate for the tools they need.

3. What courses/age group do you teach?

I teach college students, I teach at the beginning and end of the curriculum, so intro level students as well as Capstone.

4. Have you always used the same format to teach?

Broadly yes, but it comes out differently in the early classes and the later class. My whole goal is always to pull back as much as possible and let the students take center stage. It turns out in Capstone that it is more possible to do so since they have had more development and are more prepared for that. Short answer, yes; but it comes out differently as first and second year students need more guidance.

5. What are the benefits of your teaching style?

A benefit would be that students get to practice skills in class.

6. What can be the disadvantages of your teaching style?

When you have a wide range of skills in the class it presents a real challenge, some students finish quickly and others are still waiting for directions. If I were to give a lecture, I would not be entirely sure if everyone was understanding the topic but it may be more straight

forward because there are lecture slides. With this format, I am challenged with working with a diverse group of individuals that are all in different points in their education.

7. What resources do you have to ensure success for your students' learning?

We have a teaching learning and assessment office, TLA. They run co-ops, so faculty can sign up to lead a Co-op on a topic. They do have workshops at the beginning and the end of the semester. Personally, I do not engage with those much even though I feel professional development is extremely important. I am one of those people who feels that I can get a lot about webinars and reading that I have access to in my own time. There is support, but I struggle with my schedule, it is impossible to fit in extra meetings at times. I think K-12 does a better job since they are able to add it into their structured schedule.

8. Is there funding available for professional development in regard to the teaching style you have chosen? Did you need outside resources outside of CSUMB?

There are seminars and workshops provided, but I find myself doing this development and research during my own time. I think that the school should set aside money for experts to come in and speak to all professors as professional development. We could have a specific day, such as Friday where there are not as many classes. We could set aside an hour or so where we all can get the much needed information and guidance.

### **Professor 2: Interview Questions/ Answers: March 20, 2023**

1. What is culturally responsive pedagogy in your own words?

Culturally Relevant Teaching uses cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more practical and relevant in the classroom (regardless of the level of teaching K-University).

One thing that I have to share to help one understand what I see as “genuine” culturally responsive pedagogy includes the innate desire to empathize. This is something that I feel workshops/training/ seminars cannot teach. It has to come from within. Authentic and holistic concern for others’ wellbeing.

2. What do you consider to be your teaching style?

I love to be known as a Facilitator; this means that I learn from my students just as much as they learn from me. I may be a subject matter "expert", however, real life experiences have a qualitative depth that textbooks cannot give. I want my students to feel that they are big part of what happens in the classroom. Power dynamics are real thing and many do not consider the damage that can be done when power dynamics takes over a learning space. A true teacher/instructor/facilitator needs to be transparent and true; vulnerability is something that is needed and it is something that one cannot fake. If there was a term to describe what was just explained as a teaching style, that is what I would choose.

3. What courses/age group do you teach?

I teach lower div/ upper dive and yes, I teach the same in all courses.

4. Have you always used the same format to teach?

This is a wonderful question!.... Looking back, I was not as knowledgeable the best teaching techniques. Textbook information can only teach so much. Learning how to teach really happen organically in the classroom. I would have to say no to this question; I did have a more "textbook" framework when I started teaching (over 10 years ago) and now I find myself in a completely different place. My teaching style today has evolved over the years and I am grateful for that.

5. What are the benefits of your teaching style?

I would hope that my teaching style has many benefits, however, I am not a student in my class so this question is hard to answer. I cannot speak for my students. I can share what I hope are some benefits: a bias free environment, no judgment zone, free to express their true feelings, and the freedom to approach and ask for assistance.

6. What can be the disadvantages of your teaching style?

This teaching style can easily misconstrued for leniency. When one is undisciplined it can be hard to keep oneself on track and this can pose lack of success for some students. I can say that this percentage is low compared to those that thrive and are successful in my classes.

7. What resources do you have to ensure success for your students' learning?

I am not sure what resources I can make available to any student to ensure their success. I can only make myself available to them and their needs to assist them through achieving success for themselves. Teaching and learning are reciprocal. There cant be one without the other. Students must take ownership of their own learning and I can help make that happen for them by supporting their diverse needs.

8. Is there funding available for professional development in regard to the teaching style you have chosen? Did you need outside resources outside of CSUMB?

CSUMB has many professional development opportunities, however, Culturally responsive teaching is not yet mainstream. My cohort and I (4 lecturers) have been tirelessly working to change this campus wide. We feel this teaching style is something that needs to be integrated across the disciplines and unfortunately, there is not funding for it. We need to apply for grants and outside funding to make this happen.

**Appendix B:**  
**Anonymous College Student Survey Questions (Class 1):**

1: How would you describe the teaching style of your professor? Check all that apply

- Lectures
- Collaboration/Discussion based
- Student Centered (students guide learning)
- Tests
- Individual work
- Group work/ Project based

2. Do you enjoy the teaching style of your professor?

Yes No (100% said yes)

3. Do you feel comfortable speaking out in class?

Yes No (86% said yes)

4. Does the professor make your thoughts feel important?

Yes No (100% said yes)

5. Do you feel that you are expanding your knowledge/perspective by being in this class?

Yes No (92 % said yes)

6. Do you feel like you can be yourself in class?

Yes No (84 % said yes)



7. Do you feel that the Professor has created a successful environment for learning?  
Yes No

8. What do you enjoy about the teaching styles of your professor?

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9. What specifically would you like your professor to improve in regard to their teaching?

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**Anonymous College Student Survey Questions (Class 2):**

1: How would you describe the teaching style of your professor? Check all that apply

- Lectures
- Collaboration/Discussion based
- Student Centered (students guide learning)
- Tests
- Individual work
- Group work/ Project based

2. Do you enjoy the teaching style of your professor?

Yes No (95% said yes)

3. Do you feel comfortable speaking out in class?

Yes No (85% said yes)

4. Does the professor make your thoughts feel important?

Yes No (90% said yes)

5. Do you feel that you are expanding your knowledge/perspective by being in this class?

Yes No (80% said yes)

6. Do you feel like you can be yourself in class?

Yes No (95% said yes)

7. Do you feel that the Professor has created a successful environment for learning?

Yes No (85% said yes)

8. What do you enjoy about the teaching styles of your professor?

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9. What specifically would you like your professor to improve in regard to their teaching?

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