

2009 TEXAS READING FIRST INITIATIVE (TRFI) LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

*A FOCUS ON IMPLEMENTATION:
DYNAMIC LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINING EXCELLENCE*

Culturally Responsive Literacy Instruction: What Leaders Need to Know

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DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE

- Framework for describing similarities and differences among cultures
- Refers to beliefs and behaviors of *groups*
 - Shared beliefs and behaviors, not those of individuals
- Refers to *tendencies* of a group
 - An individual within a group may not adhere to all beliefs or behaviors at all times
- Recognized as a dynamic process
 - Tends to change over time (generation to generation)
- Each dimension represents a continuum. Individuals vary in where they fall along continuum; variance depends on circumstances (e.g. socialization, personality).
- No culture is at the extreme.

1. Space
2. Time
3. Activity
4. Human Nature
5. Relationship between Humans & the Environment
6. Human Relationships
7. Masculinity-Femininity
- 8. Individualism-Collectivism**
- 9. Low/High Context Communication**
- 10. Power Distance**
- 11. Uncertainty Avoidance**

Adapted from: (1) Hofstede, G. (1997). *Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
(2) Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Newbury London: Sage.

INDIVIDUALISM – COLLECTIVISM

- Refers to how people view themselves in relation to others in the world.
- Individualism – individuals loosely tied; everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family.
- Collectivism – people integrated into extended, cohesive ingroups; provides protection in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.

INDIVIDUALISM

COLLECTIVISM

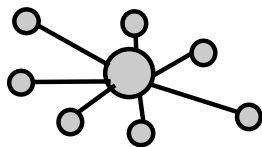


Individualism emphasizes values of:

- Individual identity (child as individual)
- Independence
- Personal responsibility
- Personal choice; individual initiative & achievement; self-realization

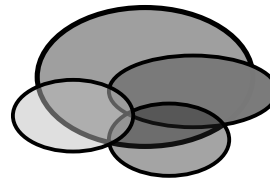
- Autonomy
- Standards should be same for everyone
- Developing relationships based on trust & mutual interests
- Education is a partnership; teacher is public servant

- Use praise to motivate & build self-esteem



Collectivism emphasizes values of:

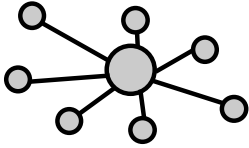
- Group identity (child as part of family)
- Interdependence
- Shared responsibility
- Group goals/success (i.e., do what's best for the group); belonging to the group
- Harmony, cooperation
- Different rules for ingroups & outgroups
- Developing lifelong relationships w/in own community; unquestioned loyalty
- Boundaries between home & school; cognitive skills are responsibility of teachers while parents are socializing agents; teacher as authority figure
- Use criticism to prevent complacency & motivate



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(2) Hofstede, G. (1984). *Culture's consequences: International differences in work-related values*. Newbury London: Sage
(3) Trumbull, E., Rothstein, C., Quiroz, B., & Greenfield, P. (2001). *Bridging cultures between home and school*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum Associates.

INDIVIDUALISM–COLLECTIVISM AND COMMUNICATION STYLES

If you are an individualist & your ingroups look similar to this drawing:



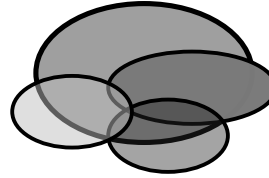
then your communication style tends to be:

LOW CONTEXT COMMUNICATION

- Direct
- Explicit–listener infers little
- Focused on getting point across
- Honest (e.g. “If you’re my friend you will tell me the truth...”)
- Factual
- Precise (e.g., say what you mean)
- Brief
- Jumps into conversation
- Uncomfortable with silence; viewed as lack of communication
- Emotionally neutral (i.e., inflection remains stable, minimal use of body language and silence)

Since individualists tend to compartmentalize their relationships, work, & many aspects of their daily lives, they require more detailed background information to communicate with each other. Because members of their ingroups usually do not mix or even know each other, they are usually more concerned with clarity of communication over group harmony. If a conflict occurs, it affects a few and not all ingroup members

If you are a collectivist & your ingroups look similar to this drawing:



then your communication style tends to be:

HIGH CONTEXT COMMUNICATION

- Indirect
- Implicit–listener infers a lot
- Focused on preserving harmony/
- Saving face; Chooses not to say anything (e.g., “If you’re my friend you won’t hurt me by telling me the truth”)
- Focused on feelings and relationships
- Ambiguous (e.g. may not mean what is said)
- Longer/shorter with information that may appear not to link to topic
- Waits to be recognized before speaking
- Silence is used purposefully as communication
- Emotion (i.e., inflection fluctuates, use of body language and silence) expected part of communication

Since collectivists tend to have close, personal networks of family & friends that know each other for years & share many of the same experiences, they do not require as much in depth background information to communicate with each other. Because they spend a great amount of time together and constantly depend on each other, respecting each other’s feelings becomes the priority. If a conflict occurs it affects all ingroup members and not just a few.

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CULTURAL VARIATIONS IN STORIES

Purpose

- Stories may differ in their purpose—to entertain, teach, display knowledge or skill, organize and plan, regulate behavior.

Themes

- While themes may be universal, cultures vary in working out of these universal themes and concepts, plots, and emphases provided. For example, achievement motivation themes have been found to relate to child-rearing practices and status-mobility available to people in a culture. Strong parent authority and relatively fixed class status are associated with fewer achievement motivation themes.

Story Schema and Structure

- Cultural variation exists in the favored number of episodes in a story: Western cultures favor 3-part stories; many Native American cultures prefer 4-part stories; some Asian cultures prefer 2-part stories; Chinese prefer 5-part stories (e.g., in Western fairy tales things often happen in sets of three).
- Stories may vary in the emphasis placed on different story components. Some may not emphasize goal-directed action of characters; others may emphasize background information, context. Religion or cultural values may direct emphasis away from goal-directed behavior.
- Culture affects story comprehension as well as production. People develop schemas for content and structure, based on their exposure and experience with storytelling within their community, to guide their comprehension of narratives. In intercultural settings, texts may become hard to follow, may be misunderstood, or may not appear to have a point; these factors may interfere with enjoyment of storytelling activities.

Roles Associated with Storytelling

- Cultures vary in the roles for storyteller and audience, and nature and amount of audience participation. For example, in some groups, only adults may be permitted to tell stories; the audience may be expected to listen in silence, or interaction between storyteller and audience may be valued.

Narrative Style

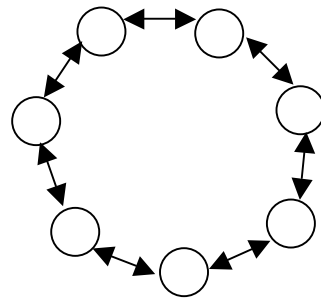
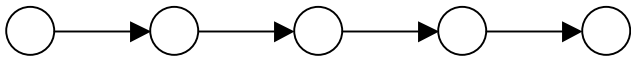
- Cultures vary in storytelling styles. Topic-associated narratives develop themes through anecdotal association. Themes are not overtly stated but inferred from the series of personal anecdotes. In school, where teachers may not share this background, such texts may appear incoherent. Topic centered styles tend to be associated with school language and with books. They are linear in nature, with a logical progression of events.

Cited in: Guerra, P. L., & García, S. B. (2000). *Understanding the cultural contexts of teaching and learning: Trainer's Guide*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL).

Source: California State Department of Education (1986). *Beyond language: Social and cultural factors in schooling for language minority students*. Los Angeles: California State University, Evaluation, Dissemination, and Assessment Center.

NARRATIVE/STORYTELLING STYLES

TOPIC CENTERED	TOPIC ASSOCIATED
Narrative is organized around a single topic or event.	Narrative is organized around a series of implicitly linked anecdotes or episodes.
Temporal and locational grounding and key characters remain consistent.	Temporal and locational grounding and key characters frequently shift.
Narrative follows a linear pattern of organization—with a clear beginning, middle and end.	Narrative does not adhere to a linear pattern of organization.
Key lexical items are repeated.	



Adapted from: Guerra, P. L., & García, S. B. (2000). *Understanding the cultural contexts of teaching and learning: Trainer's Guide*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL).

Source: Hyon, S., & Sulzby, E. (1992). *Black Kindergartners' Spoken Narratives: Style, Structure, and Task*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 352 148).

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING DIFFERENT NARRATIVE/STORYTELLING STYLES

- Find resources that assist you in learning about a particular culture & literature
- Incorporate literature that accurately depicts the culture & narrative style of your students & promotes positive role models
- Discuss story structure of non-mainstream literature explicitly & compare & contrast with mainstream literature
- Ask students to draw a story in order to visualize the important aspects
- Have students explicitly take apart a story to become aware of the implicit parts
- Develop checks for comprehension & testing that reflect the kind of information the student is likely to extract from the story (i.e., skills taught)
- Have students develop stories of ancestors, family events, or other topics from oral storytelling by family members, friends, or neighbors & share in class
- Have students create original books by themselves or with their family & add to the classroom/school library for other students to check out & read
- Study cultures in enough depth so students can understand each one through art, music, dance, & literature
- Invite parents, family, & community members to share stories with your class
- Conduct home visits & observe literacy practices or in meetings invite parents to share information about their literacy practices to understand the literacy behaviors of your students & to use this information as a bridge

Adapted from: Guerra, P. L., & García, S. B. (2000). *Understanding the cultural contexts of teaching and learning: Trainer's Guide*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL).

Source: McCabe, A. (1997). Cultural Background and Storytelling: A Review and Implications for Schooling. *The Elementary School Journal*, 97(5), (pp. 453-473).

RESOURCES FOR MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE

The following resources for multicultural literature can be found on the Internet:

Barahona Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents California State University-San Marcos

<http://www2.csusm.edu/csb/>

This site informs educational decision-makers about books centered on Latino people and culture and about books in Spanish and their value in education of English-speaking and Spanish-speaking children and adolescents.

Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

<http://www4.uwm.edu/clacs/aa/index.cfm>

This site lists and recognizes U.S. works of fiction, poetry, folklore, or selected non-fiction published in the previous year in English or Spanish that authentically and engagingly portray Latin America, the Caribbean, or Latinos in the U.S.

Cooperative Children's Book Center University of Wisconsin-Madison

<http://www.education.wisc.edu/ccbc/>

This site contains a number of resources related to multicultural literature such as the following two items:

- Small Presses Owned and Operated by People of Color: Publishers of Children's Books
- Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults, Volumes 1 and 2

Reading is Fundamental (RIF) Children's Books that Celebrate the African American Experience

http://www.rif.org/educators/books/african_american_experience.msp

Tomas Rivera Mexican-American Children's Book Awards Texas State University-San Marcos

<http://riverabookaward.info/>

This site lists award-winning books that depict the Mexican American experience.

EVALUATING BOOKS FOR CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS

- **Who is the author?**
 - a. Is the author a person of color?
 - b. Does the author have a reputation for writing culturally authentic literature?

- **What messages do the pictures convey?**
 - a. Who or what is represented in the book?
 - b. Are the pictures realistic of the group they represent? Or do they represent stereotypes?
 - c. Are the objects or concepts familiar to the children in your classroom?

- **What messages and whose values does the story convey?**
 - a) What is the primary language of the book?
 - b) Are the terms familiar to the children in your classroom?
 - c) What is the story about?
 - d) What do the characters say or do?
 - e) What is expected of the characters?
 - f) What is considered good or bad in the book?
 - g) What is the moral or lesson taught in the story?

- **What is the narrative/storytelling style?**
 - a. The story has a beginning, middle, and end (topic centered)?
 - b. Is the story a collection of episodes with no clear beginning, middle, or end? (topic associated)

- **How could you link this book to the children's experiences?**
 - a. What concepts or characters are familiar to the children?
 - b. What story events are reflective of students' home experiences?
 - c. Are there different names or ways of saying the same concept or term so that it is familiar to the children's experiences (e.g., say it in the home language, rephrase, give examples)?
 - d. Can the story be retold in a different way to convey the same meaning? (Old MacDonald had an apartment, bosque, granja, ranch, condo, zoo, pet store, etc.)

Adapted by Barbara Dray from:

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Bishop, R.S. (1997). Selecting literature for a multicultural curriculum. In V. Harris (Ed.) *Using multiethnic literature in the K-8 classroom*, (pp. 1-19). Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers.

LIBRARY CHECKLIST

Are there books in your library that:

___ Represent a wide range of diversity that is characteristic of your community, society, and the world (e.g., illustrations or storylines that reflect your families' experiences)?

If yes, give examples. If no, give suggestions:

___ Reflect different groups (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, economic class, language, disability, religion, geographic region, immigrant status, etc.)

If yes, give examples. If no, give suggestions:

___ Address diversity in an authentic way? Are there realistic, positive images of the families you serve? (*Note:* Translated books can help bridge the language differences but not necessarily the cultural differences.)

If yes, give examples. If no, give suggestions:

___ Depict characters accurately in their physical appearance, behavior, attitudes, values, language, beliefs, and way of life?

If yes, give examples. If no, give suggestions:

___ Show diverse group in a variety of roles (e.g., working class, upper class, different occupations, traditional customs/holidays)?

If yes, give examples. If no, give suggestions:

___ Represent stories about diverse groups and cultures that have been historically distorted, patronized, or excluded from curricula? Promote discussion about the children's heritage and past, who they are today, and their future?

If yes, give examples. If no, give suggestions:

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