Chapter 1: Introduction

Transcript:
This is a module on developing a sociocultural consciousness.
It is one module in a six-part series on culturally responsive pedagogy, or CRP. If you have not done so already, we suggest you begin by watching a short video called “An Introduction to Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.” If you have already seen this introduction, you may continue on to chapter two.
The first three modules in this series - including this one - focus on mindsets needed to enact culturally responsive instruction. The latter three focus on the outcomes of CRP, and corresponding instructional actions.

Introduction to CRP
What is it?

What is culturally responsive pedagogy?

• Using cultural experiences and perspectives of students to teach them more effectively
• Placing student cultural and social identities at center of one’s teaching
• Working toward academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness

Transcript:
Culturally responsive pedagogy is using “the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students” in order to teach them more effectively (Gay, 2002, p. 106).

It is a pedagogical perspective that places students’ social and cultural identities at the center of one’s teaching. It is oriented toward social justice, and works toward the outcomes of student academic achievement, cultural competence, and critical consciousness (Bennett, 2012; Irizarry, 2007; Ladson-Billings, 1995, 2009).

Student Diversity

Why culturally responsive pedagogy?

Transcript:
Why is culturally responsive pedagogy important, and why does it matter for 21st century teachers and students?

With each passing day, the U.S. student population becomes more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse. The teaching force, however, does not.

The U.S. teaching force is approximately 87% White, while the student population is only 49.8% White (Griner & Stewart, 2012; Klein, 2015).

Twenty-one percent of U.S. schoolchildren primarily speak a language other than English at home, while the teaching force is overwhelmingly made up of monolingual English speakers (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

Cultural difference between teachers and students can cause students to experience a tension between their cultural identity - or, who they are outside of school - and their academic identity - or, who they are expected to be inside of school (Gay, 2002; Nasir, McLaughlin, & Jones, 2009).

Racial/Ethnic Disparities

Copyright © 2017 Arizona Board of Regents, All rights reserved • SanfordInspireProgram.org

For a complete list of references, refer to the On-Demand Module [Working Against Racial Bias].

1
Transcript:
This disconnect is one factor that contributes to ongoing racial and ethnic disparities in academic achievement, dropout rate, school discipline, and referral for special education services (Cochran-Smith, 2004). Click on each card for statistical information about these disparities.

**CRP role in change**

Culturally responsive pedagogy, or CRP, seeks to address the current and historical trends responsible for inequities like these. Teachers seek to make their instruction **responsive** to the lives and experiences of students, and bring students’ academic identities into harmony with their cultural identities.

There is no single right way to “do” culturally responsive pedagogy. Rather, it is a way of **thinking about** and **approaching** work with students, families, and communities (Ladson-Billings, 2011).

This series of modules is intended to develop the key mindsets, dispositions, and instructional actions needed to enact CRP in your life and in your classroom.

Before we continue, a word on cognitive dissonance.

It is impossible to talk about CRP without talking about things like race, racism, privilege, inequity, and oppression. As you work through the modules in this series, you may experience some cognitive dissonance. This is when you hear information that seems to challenge or contradict a belief you have.

When a person experiences cognitive dissonance, a common response is to shut down, or reject the new information out of hand because it creates mental discomfort.

Instead, consider creating a space for two contradictory thoughts to exist in your mind at the same time. Think about them, then talk about them with others. Working through cognitive dissonance is how we expand our consciousness, and a high level of consciousness is necessary for CRP (Bennett, 2012; DiAngelo, 2012; Gay, 2002).
Chapter 2: Identities and Experiences

Identity and Experience

Transcript:

Teachers aren’t produced in a factory, each one the same as the other. We each have a personal biography that tells the story of who we are, where we’ve been, and what we’ve done.

We’ve also been shaped by the cultural contexts in which we’ve lived. Culture is “the way life is organized in a particular community or group” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002, p. 35). Culture is fluid and dynamic; this means that the cultural practices in a given group can change, and members of that culture can enact them in different ways. Culture is also overlapping; all of us have been shaped by membership in multiple groups and communities of people (Artiles, 2015).

The intersection of our personal biography and cultural context gives rise to a unique set of experiences, as well as our personal identity markers. Your identity markers are the different “parts” that make up who you are.

Identities are intersectional. For example, the way you experience your social class can affect the way you experience your gender, and vice versa. This is why a person’s identity cannot be reduced to a single marker (Artiles, 2015). All of your identity markers interact with one another – and your cultural context – to make you uniquely who you are.

Having said that, here is a list of major identity markers, or the ones that society tends to treat as most salient. Pause and think for a moment: which of these identity markers feel most personally significant to you in your identity?

Cultural Eye

Our worldview shapes the way we make sense of and interpret the world around us.

(Hammond, 2010; Inoue, 2008)
Personal biography and culture shape identity and experience.

In turn, our identities and experiences shape our worldview, which could also be thought of as our perspective, or “cultural eye” (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Irvine, 2003).

Our worldview is what we use to make sense of and interpret the world around us, including the behavior of others (Davis, 2012; Hammond, 2015).

**Defining Sociocultural Consciousness (0:34)**

A sociocultural consciousness is an awareness that:

- One’s own worldview is not universal, but shaped by experience and identity.
- One’s worldview is not inherently right” or superior to that of others.

(Villegas & Lucas, 2002)

A sociocultural consciousness means operating with an awareness that one’s own worldview is not universal. It also means believing that one’s perspective is not inherently “right” or superior to that of others.

At first glance, these two statements may seem basic, or even obvious. After all, most would agree with the idea that different people see the world in different ways.

However, there are a few things that make it difficult to operate with a sociocultural consciousness, despite one’s best intentions.

**Chapter 3: Race, Schools, and Society**

**Implicit Biases**

Our life experiences and social conditioning lead us to develop implicit biases. These are assumptions, stereotypes, or attitudes about different groups of people (Hammond, 2015).
Our biases are often invisible to us because they’ve been integrated into our worldview and just seem natural (Allen et al., 2013; DiAngelo, 2012; Gay & Kirkland, 2003).

However, they can cause us to make unfair judgments about others. Some examples of biases might be things like: which neighborhoods are “good” or “bad”; which students are more likely to achieve or misbehave; which parents “care” about their children’s education, and so on.

Biases can become problematic and dangerous because they have power attached to them. And this is because we don’t live in a society in which everyone exists on a level playing field. Some identities, experiences, and perspectives are privileged over others. (DiAngelo, 2012; Hammond, 2015; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Seidl & Hancock, 2011).

Why Race?

Our society gives unearned privilege to some while disadvantaging others on the basis of race, class, gender, and other identity markers. (Hammond, 2015)

Transcript:

Our society gives unearned privilege to some while disadvantaging others on the basis of race, class, gender, and other identity markers (Hammond, 2015).

For the next few minutes, we are going to focus specifically on racial inequity and bias in education.

Why would we do this?

Some people believe that we live in a “post-racial” society. In this view, race has ceased to be a significant factor impacting life opportunities and outcomes (Wise, 2010). Teachers who operate with this worldview might argue that they should take a “colorblind” approach to working with students, and just treat every child the same.

So, once again: why investigate the role of racial bias in education? And what does it have to do with developing a sociocultural consciousness?
Having a sociocultural consciousness means recognizing that the experiences, perspective, and reality of another may be very different from one’s own. It also means recognizing the reality of inequity, and committing to fight it.

Why focus on race in education? Three reasons.

Consider the following example. Survey data has indicated that six in ten Whites admit to believing at least one racist stereotype about Blacks (Wise, 2010). For example, that Blacks are less intelligent or inherently more aggressive. It’s likely that the level of racist bias may be even higher, since many people may hold such views but not admit to them. Now consider how a teacher might treat Black students if he or she has an implicit bias that is based on one or more of these stereotypes.

To see an example of how racial bias plays out on both an individual and systemic level in education, click “Example.”

If you are ready to move on, click “Proceed.”

Let’s look at an example of how societal racism, implicit bias, and individual behavior combine to create racial inequity in schools.
Consider disparities in student discipline. A 2012 study by Stanford University revealed that teachers of all races were more likely to punish Black students (Smith, 2015).

Let’s assume that the vast majority of teachers don’t intentionally discriminate against Black students. What could explain such a drastic inequity?

Consider the following...

Between 82 and 87% of U.S. school teachers are White (Griner & Stewart, 2012). All teachers – white and of color – have been socialized into a society in which White norms are dominant and omnipresent (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Matias, 2013).

White, middle-class norms for behavior are the dominant paradigm for appropriate behavior in school. These norms include how to speak, act, and show respect toward authority figures (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Matias, 2013).

Teachers of all races are exposed to these norms. They are also exposed to messages (from TV, media, film, family, and other sources) that associate Blacks with violence and criminality (Wise, 2010).

This messaging can contribute to an implicit bias in which teachers (of all races) assume that Blacks are more likely to misbehave in school, relative to other students.

Implicit bias can lead teachers to interpret Black students’ culturally specific forms of speaking and interacting as misbehavior, even if they were never intended that way. Bias can also cause teachers to take a punitive – rather than supportive – approach to dealing with misbehavior (Gay, 2000).

Societal racism and bias have a real and devastating effect on the lives of students. Nationwide, Black students are three-and-a-half times more likely to be suspended or expelled from school than White students, and being suspended drastically increases the likelihood that a child will never graduate high school (Smith, 2015).

Chapter 4: Racial Bias and Teacher Behavior

Racism in Schools

Transcript:

Institutionalized racism is woven into schools through curriculum, discipline and assessment practices, and segregation.

Click on each term for a brief explanation. When you have finished, click “Proceed.”
Racial Bias and Teacher Behavior

Let’s now look at three ways that racial bias manifests itself on the level of individual teacher behavior.

The first is stereotyping. This is when teachers make racially-biased assumptions or generalizations about students (Steele, 2010; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

The second is adopting a stance of colorblindness. This is when teachers are unwilling to discuss race, or even acknowledge that it matters.

Many people are socialized into believing that colorblindness is the “correct” way to view the world (DiAngelo, 2012). However, for many students of color, race is an important part of their identity and experiences. Many students of color perceive that their race affects the way they are treated – both in and out of school (Nasir, McLaughlin, & Jones, 2008). A stance of colorblindness can thus have the effect of denying people of color the reality of their experiences, and denying the existence of racism (DiAngelo, 2012; Matias, 2013; Seidl & Hancock, 2011; Swartz, 2003). After all, if a person professes that he doesn’t “see” race, then how would he be able to see or recognize racism?
The last behavior we’re going to discuss is racial microaggressions. These are words and actions that devalue students of color, or convey a message of inferiority (Hammond, 2015; Sue et al., 2007). Teachers don’t usually intend to commit microaggressions, or are even aware that they’ve committed them, but their effect on students is very real and harmful.

Click on any of these behaviors to see an example of what they might sound like in a real-life situation, as well as how they could be perceived and experienced by a student.

When you are ready to move on, click “Proceed.”

Chapter 5: Working Against Racial Bias

Consciousness vs. Dysconsciousness

Transcript:

A strong sociocultural consciousness can help us begin to disrupt racial oppression and marginalization on both an individual and a systemic level.

However, part of developing a sociocultural consciousness is understanding its opposite: dysconsciousness. Dysconsciousness is the assumption that one’s own worldview is “correct,” and that it’s shared by everyone. A person with a dysconscious orientation believes that society is fair and just, that everyone exists on a level playing field, and that school is a meritocracy where students succeed or fail solely on the basis of individual effort (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

One consequence of dysconsciousness is the reproduction of racist practices and attitudes. Often this takes the form of “victim-blaming,” or rationalizing inequity on the basis of individual choice or lack of merit.

Check for Understanding
Transcript:
Take a moment to check your understanding. Here is a list of five statements. Place a check next to each one based on whether you believe it reflects a conscious or a dysconscious orientation.
Press “Submit” when you are finished.

Check your answers. Click on any statement for which you would like an explanation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conscious</th>
<th>Dysconscious</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>It's a parent's own choice to send her child to a bad school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If a student is failing, it's his own fault for not trying harder or asking for help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If a student is consistently misbehaving, the teacher should seek to learn how he (i.e. the teacher) may be contributing to the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>All students have a chance to succeed. Things like racism and cultural bias are just excuses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>If a student says that something is racist, the teacher should seek to understand why.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Schools provide an opportunity for everyone. Some students take advantage of it, and some students don't.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check your answers. Click on any statement for which you would like an explanation.

It's a parent's own choice to send their child to a bad school.
This statement ignores what parents might be up against, or the different forces that constrain where they can send their child to school.

Schools provide an opportunity for everyone. Some students take advantage of it, and some students don't.

Check your answers. Click on any statement for which you would like an explanation.

If a student is failing, it's his own fault for not trying harder or asking for help.
This statement fails to consider that some students disengage from school because they feel unwelcome and unvalued there, and don't believe their teachers will give them the support they need.

Schools provide an opportunity for everyone. Some students take advantage of it, and some students don't.
Check your answers. Click on any statement for which you would like an explanation.

If a student is consistently misbehaving, the teacher should seek to learn how he (i.e. the teacher) may be contributing to the problem.

This statement acknowledges that the teacher may be playing a role in the student’s misbehavior, and shares responsibility for solving the problem.

Schools provide an opportunity for everyone. Some students take advantage of it, and some students don’t.

Check your answers. Click on any statement for which you would like an explanation.

All students have a chance to succeed. Things like racism and cultural bias are just excuses.

This statement disregards very real problems that affect the lives and experiences of students.

Schools provide an opportunity for everyone. Some students take advantage of it, and some students don’t.

Check your answers. Click on any statement for which you would like an explanation.

If a student says that something is racist, the teacher should seek to understand why.

This statement shows respect and care for the student by seeking to understand his or her experience and perspective.

Schools provide an opportunity for everyone. Some students take advantage of it, and some students don’t.
Taking Action

Transcript:

So, how can we take action to begin developing our own sociocultural consciousness?

In their book *Educating Culturally Responsive Teachers* (2002), Tamara Lucas and Ana Maria Villegas make two suggestions.

The first is to learn about yourself. Specifically, where are you on the continuum from dysconsciousness to consciousness? What are your beliefs about teachers, students, and schools, and what experiences have informed these beliefs? In what ways is your own perspective limited?

Their second suggestion is to learn about the relationship between schools and society (Cochran-Smith, 1991; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Specifically, the experiences of marginalized groups in public education and the way schools reproduce social inequities.

To their two suggestions we add a third: build your sociocultural consciousness by increasing your interpersonal awareness. That is, seek to understand the perspectives of others – especially during times of conflict or uncertainty (Seidl & Hancock, 2011).
Recap

Transcript:
Developing a sociocultural consciousness is hard. It’s far easier to stay within the boundaries of our own perspectives, to ignore our biases, and to believe that others should adapt to us.

This is why the most transformational teachers are the ones who attempt to see their classrooms - and the world - through the eyes of their students. Seeking to understand the perspectives of others is both an act of love and an expression of allyship.

Continue on to the resource section, where you’ll be introduced to some concrete steps you can take to continue developing your sociocultural consciousness.

Chapter 6: Case Studies

How to use the resource

Transcript:
So far in this module, we identified three areas for reflection that can help develop one’s sociocultural consciousness.

They were: learning about self, learning about schools and society, and learning from others.

This is the Identity and Sociocultural Consciousness Resource. It is a resource to help guide your reflection in all three of these areas. Take a moment to review, then click “Proceed” when you are ready to continue.

Copyright © 2017 Arizona Board of Regents, All rights reserved • SanfordInspireProgram.org
For a complete list of references, refer to the On-Demand Module [Working Against Racial Bias].
We have gathered interviews from three practicing educators who spent time reflecting on questions from the Identity and Sociocultural Consciousness Resource.

Here is a little bit about each teacher’s background. We’ve provided some information about each teacher’s level of experience thinking and talking about some of the major topics of this module. We’ve also indicated the question from the resource that he or she chose to respond to, as well as the major topics he or she touched upon in the interview.

Think about the teacher whose responses you’d like to explore, then select that case study from the side menu.

**Erin – Elementary: Introduction**

Transcript:

Meet Erin. Erin teaches at a Title I high school with a racially, ethnically, and socioeconomically diverse population of students. She has decided to respond to this question from the “Learning About Self” section of the resource:

**How and when did you learn about race?**  
**In what ways has your racial identity shaped your sense of place in the world?**
Video Transcript:

Erin: The question I chose to respond to was, “How and when did you learn about race and in what ways has your racial identity shaped your sense of place in the world?” I chose this question because I think I’ve had a progression of learning from childhood to adulthood that’s really changed my understanding of race. I don’t know if I can say I can pinpoint a place where I’ve really understood and known about race. In growing up my family kind of had this belief of acceptance; I think I was taught this idea of acceptance for anything, including race. I would say my parents most often spoke in generalities. You know, “Underneath our skin we’re all equal.” They really spoke a lot about equality but there was never anything that was really explicit in what they were talking about when they were talking about race.

I wouldn’t say - at least, as a child - that I had anything that was explicit in learning about race. And, moving forward, I would say that because of that I didn’t necessarily think that race was….I didn’t use race as a primary indicator for my own identity. Now I can recognize it’s something I’ve had the luxury to ignore, when there are other groups of people who don’t necessarily have that same luxury, that same privilege that I have had to possibly ignore that piece of my identity because it doesn’t impact me - or I haven’t felt it impact me the same way that it has impacted other groups.

My background in identifying my own race created an obstacle for me in thinking. I wasn’t thinking about race as something important and therefore when I was choosing literature to expose those students to and I was making those choices, I maybe was not exposing them to the things that would help them in their learning. Had I made better interpersonal connections with them and had open conversations about things like race that might have mattered to them or exposed them to literature that would facilitate some of those conversations or would have been really nice to pair with some conversation, we would have been able to have thinking - or they would have been able to have some thinking about that as something that’s important to them and been able to identify the differences we had in the room and help move them toward appreciating those differences.

Follow-up Question

As a white teacher working primarily with students of color, how do you think not talking about race affected their perceptions of you?

Transcript:

One of the essential tasks for developing a sociocultural consciousness is stepping into (and learning from) the perspectives of others.

For that reason, we asked Erin this follow-up question:
As a white teacher working primarily with students of color, how do you think not talking about race affected their perceptions of you?

Video Transcript:

INTERVIEWER: As a white teacher teaching primarily students of color, how do you think that not talking about race affected their perceptions of you?

Erin: So originally, thinking back, I think that my love for them - and I truly do still love them - I thought that would kind of combat any obstacle that came in our way, including race. That my whiteness wouldn’t matter and that their brownness wouldn’t matter and I think that that goes back to a lot of my upbringing - in that, white as an identity marker wasn’t the most important to me because it wasn’t something I felt like had an impact on me. Or, I had the luxury of ignoring that, and that’s not a luxury the students who were in front of me had. And so I think that they…connected to me at a level that…the best level that we could. And I think that had I been better in talking about race and had I been better about talking about the differences in general, I would have been able to help them move forward in life. I think I would have been able to look at them on a more holistic level and think, “My job isn’t just to teach you the skills that are required to pass this class, or to pass high school, or to pass the state test,” but rather I would have exposed them to conversations that would have truly prepared them for life outside of school. And I think my inabilities to recognize race as something that was important to me led me to feel like it probably wasn’t important to them, and therefore it wasn’t even a topic that I chose to incorporate in our conversations.

Originally I thought, again, this idea that, “I love them, they love me,” and because of that there was nothing that was in conflict in our relationship. But the more…And I will say, too, I am married to a Mexican man, and I think because of that I think I felt that I was just like them and they were just like me. I was assuming that the experiences that they had had were very similar to mine, and that they felt very similar ways about certain issues…to the way that I did. And I think that, not talking about it and not being open with them about it caused them not to feel comfortable talking to me about it.

I remember one specific instance we had. It was during a little bit of political turmoil in Phoenix where immigration was concerned. And I had Hispanic students who I could see were having conversations about it, but never really approached me about it. And I don’t know why, and I wish I could rewind, but I never approached them about it, either. It was something that, as I was sitting at my teacher desk in the morning doing my teacher business in the morning, they would come in and as they were eating their breakfast they were having conversations about something that of course I overheard, and instead of interjecting or engaging in a dialogue with them to share thinking about it, I just listened. And I would bring it home and maybe talk about it with my husband or something like that, but I never engaged in that conversation with them. And now, again, in reflecting I know that they clearly didn’t feel comfortable talking to me about it. I think that because they were comfortable having that conversation in my room they felt like maybe it was a safe place, but still, clearly they saw that was not a conversation that they were “supposed” to have or needed to have with the teacher, with me. Something that I think could have…helped their thinking, and they could have helped my thinking.
Silvio – Middle School: Introduction

Transcript:

Meet Silvio. Silvio is an assistant principal at a Title I elementary school with a large population of Latino students. He has decided to respond to this question from the “Learning About Schools and Society” section of the resource:

In what ways do existing structures and practices in schools lead to inequitable outcomes for students from different groups?

Video Transcript:

Silvio: So one of the structures I would say that I feel like has led to inequitable outcomes would be this idea of…order. Order meaning silence, order meaning individual participation, individual performance, and very little interaction between students. The idea that the teacher up in front is the sole provider of knowledge and skill. I saw that play out as a teacher and I hear that play out as an administrator in conversations with other administrators as well, where they share stories about a very well-organized and successful classroom where everyone's just silent - and the teacher has “a well-managed classroom.” I feel like the reality is students need to be comfortable, students need to be prepared to engage with their peers - in ways where they disagree. In ways where they see the same situation differently. Because that’s what we see as adults.

Pause and Think
Transcript:

In his response, Silvio talks about the ways in which an emphasis on order and social control can have damaging effects on students - particularly students of color.

Pause and think for a moment: To what extent have you seen this play out in your own experiences as a student or teacher? How have you seen it affect students?

Structures that Cause Inequity (0:16)

Transcript:

In this clip, Silvio continues his response and identifies another structure that creates inequitable outcomes for different groups of students.

As you watch, consider your reaction to his words.

Video Transcript:

Silvio: A practice - and I would say, even a structure - is the idea of this, like, standardized tests being the sole measure of effectiveness - for schools, for teachers, for districts. It forces us - or pushes us, I should say - to believe that the way we get to this place of excellence is for students to perform on this test being passed down. Which is particularly a problem when that test pushes students to answer with one answer, and that's it. Telling students that there is only one way of understanding this passage, and that if you understand it in that way, you are an effective reader. And when you go into higher academia, that's just not the case. The strongest college classrooms are the ones where debate takes place, and each person presents their idea and defends it. And we walk away knowing that there was no "right" person - there was just multiple ways of seeing the same passage. And yet, we see tests telling us to do the exact opposite.
Follow-up Question

Transcript:

You heard Silvio talk about the effects of standardized testing on both instruction and learning outcomes for students.

In response to his response, we asked a follow-up question:

**How can teachers balance the need to prepare students for standardized tests with the need to create authentic learning experiences that will prepare them for real life?**

Video Transcript:

Silvio: I love the idea of conversation around every piece and every type of classroom experience. So if we’re talking about a reading test where there’s a passage and it asks you for the theme, and there are four choices - a, b, c, and d - I think that much like in math where a student provides an answer, a teacher may say, “Does anyone else think something differently?” I think the same thing could be said for a reading question where the question asks, “What is the theme?” and a student provides an answer, they’re asked “Why?” and we’re also posing the question to the class, “What do we think?” And I think the most powerful question - in my mind - would be the teacher providing what the book would say is the “correct” answer and then saying, “What do we think after that?” Because what a powerful conversation for students to have to say, “I disagree with what the book is telling me is right.” And then getting to a place where they can also say, “But I understand why that’s an answer I’m going to put. Not because I agree with it, but because the structure that’s been put around me tells me I need to put it there.”

INTERVIEWER: Right. Like, “Why would the people who wrote the question think that that’s right?”

Right. And having a conversation around that. I think that’s where curriculum becomes a living document, where it’s not something that’s chiseled in a rock on the wall of the classroom. It’s something that’s alive and breathing. Because the curriculum can morph as long as we’re getting to certain places with…I understand there are standards, and we’re going to hit on those standards with how we understand things like theme and comparison/contrasting ideas, but how we do that - the vehicle we arrive at that understanding - can look so many different ways.
Comparing Ideas

How can teachers balance the need to prepare students for standardized tests with the need to create authentic learning experiences that will prepare them for real life?

Silvio's Ideas:
- Asking for alternate viewpoints, opinions, and perspectives.
- Dialogue to make sense of classroom experiences.
- Interrogating correct answers.
- Curriculum as a “living document.”

Transcript:

Here were a few of the key recommendations in Silvio’s response.

Alisha (6:45)

Introduction

Meet Alisha. Alisha teaches a self-contained 8th grade class at a Title I elementary school with a large population of Latino students. She is entering her fourth year of teaching, and has decided to respond to this question from the “Learning About Self” section of the resource:

Which of your identity markers feel most significant to you?

Why do you think this is important for teachers to think about?

Transcript:

Meet Alisha. Alisha teaches a self-contained 8th grade class at a Title I elementary school with a large population of Latino students. She is entering her fourth year of teaching, and has decided to respond to this question from the “Learning About Self” section of the resource:

Which of your identity markers feel most significant to you?

Why do you think this is important for teachers to think about?

Video Transcript:
So that is something that, honestly, I still question. I think that I’m very confident in saying, “Yes, I am a mixed person,” but at the same time saying, “My experiences have actually been more toward the white area.” So, my identity is like, I don’t know if race is my most salient marker. Sometimes I think gender is my most salient marker. Or sometimes I think that, no, actually they’re so intertwined for me because even if I’m saying I’ve experienced more, like, situations where I’m surrounded…Like, in conversations with people who are white, or a situation like that, I still feel I’m a person of color, and the way people react to me is as a person of color. So that’s why I still feel, like, a little bit of confusion over myself, and that’s why I keep trying to explore it. Like, keep pushing myself to question it – because I’m not positive of, how do I feel completely? And that’s kind of the point. Being somebody who’s mixed, you’re still being told, like “Figure out your identity.” Like, “Who are you?” Exactly what is that defined as? And that’s essential, and that’s important, but I think that part of identity is knowing that your identity changes. It’s actually not static.

I think it’s, like, essential. It’s pretty crucial. Just because…I’ve struggled knowing my viewpoint; my students have struggled as well in their own. Where, like, they don’t even know that they’ve struggled because maybe nobody’s had conversations about that. And I think that, for me, it’s remembering…the fact that I’ve questioned, that I’ve thought about it, my students have thought about it. And so it’s not just that maybe people haven’t had a formal conversation about it. They also probably have had conversations about it with their family, with their friends…and knowing that it’s not just a conversation. It’s a part of who they are, and how they’re changing, and especially in middle school, where I deal with 13 and 14-year-olds, this is a time when they’re completely questioning their identity. Like, who they are, and if I’m not affirming in the sense of, “It’s okay to question. It’s okay not to know. It’s okay to think about it. It’s okay to challenge it. It’s okay to not be sure yet.” I feel like all of those are pretty essential as a teacher because if you can’t acknowledge that for yourself, how can you have your students start acknowledging it for themselves?

Classroom Example

Transcript:
In this next video, you’ll hear Alisha describe some ways that she creates space in her curriculum for students to explore - and discuss - issues related to identity markers like race, class, and gender.

**Video Transcript:**

*For me, part of the way I’m able to bring in conversations of race, conversations of gender, class is through...we do a lot of Socratic seminars in my history class. So, I’ll take in my reading, and I’ll implement that into my social studies. So, if we’re studying *To Kill a Mockingbird* in reading, then we study the Civil Rights Movement in history. So we’ll always focus around this crux of identity and race, and it’ll usually be connected to current events, like currently what’s going on around the country in multiple places. And how are they seeing race play out? And how is it happening between relationships, and how is it happening between systems? They actually have a chance to have a dialogue that’s not controlled by me, but that’s controlled by them. And, like, how they can question each other. Last year my students went in a completely different direction than I was originally thinking they were gonna go to, and it was actually...pretty beautiful because they ended up challenging one another on views of race and ethnicity and cultural background personally, based on immigration. And so, it went there from the civil rights conversations, and we had studied immigration our first quarter, and they went back to it. So that was something that was essential and important to them, and they were bringing it back in the conversation, and as a facilitator I need to know when to step back and allow that process to happen. To me it was actually beautiful as a teacher to be, like, “Okay, you’re checking me on what I thought our conversation was going to be in the first place.” You’re challenging me even further to think, like, this could have gone somewhere even deeper. It just makes me more reflective as an instructor to be, like, later on this is what I’m gonna do. Or, this is the way I’m gonna start thinking about things. Or, this is the way my students may think about things. Like, another way to predict. And also, like, allow in-the-moment teaching, you know?*
Chapter 7: Conclusion

What we’ve learned

What we’ve learned:

- What it means to operate with a sociocultural consciousness
- Impact of institutionalized racism and bias
- The difference between sociocultural consciousness and dysconsciousness
- A resource for developing sociocultural consciousness

Transcript:

Let’s recap where we’ve been so far.

You’ve learned what it means to operate with a sociocultural consciousness. You learned about the impact of institutionalized racism and bias, and contrasted sociocultural consciousness with sociocultural dysconsciousness. Finally, you were introduced to one resource that you can use for your own development, and got to see a model of how a teacher might use it.

Final Thoughts

Transcript:

Here are some final thoughts from Alisha, one of the interviewees from this module. Keep her words in mind as you move forward and continue the work of developing your sociocultural consciousness. Click the video to play.

Video Transcript:
Embrace the discomfort. It’s okay. Everybody is uncomfortable. Everybody who says they’re comfortable is a little bit faking it. Nobody can be comfortable with conversations about race, gender, or classism because they’re not comfortable – they shouldn’t be comfortable. That’s the point, right? Our students need to have these conversations because they persist in society. We need to question them, and we need to challenge them. Whenever you question or challenge anything, it’s gonna be uncomfortable. It’s not gonna be a place where we all want to go. And it’s also hard, I know, for different grade levels, to feel like “Are we challenging too much? Are we thinking too deeply about this? Are we causing a world for these students that is uncomfortable and not pretty…but I think that we would be doing a disservice to our students by not acknowledging that they are very bright human beings that see this happening in the world around them, and for you not to acknowledge it in your classroom is doing a disservice to them because they are not being affirmed in what they’re seeing, or feeling, or thinking. Because if you just question them about it, if you just talk to them about it, they will tell you that these are things that are happening.

I will be honest. My first year was very – I wanted to. I was so passionate, I was excited, but it was really uncomfortable when they actually occurred. Because I can sit here all the time and think, “Oh, I can’t wait to have this conversation with them.” But they’re gonna ask you questions that are gonna challenge you in the moment, and you’re gonna not know how to anticipate for them, and you’re gonna have to react as a person. Like, to remember to be vulnerable with your students. You’re still a person growing – you don’t know everything at all.