Tool #1: Reflecting on Your Cultural Beliefs and Expectations[1]

Directions: For each of the topics listed in Table 1, write down your beliefs or expectations for your students associated with the topic. When you are finished, compare your responses with the information in Table 2 that follows. It is important to recognize that these ideas are generalizations and will not apply to all students from a particular culture.

Table 1. Reflecting on Your Cultural Beliefs and/or Expectations

Topic	Your Beliefs and/or Expectations
Punctuality (How do you feel about students arriving on time for class or families arriving on time for school events?)	
Role of teacher in class (What do you think is the teacher's role in terms of managing a class, interacting with students, and supporting student learning?)	

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[1] Source: Adapted from Staehr Fenner, D. & Snyder, S. (2017). *Unlocking English learners' potential: Strategies for making content accessible,* pp. 36-37. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.; Hiatt, J. E., Jones-Vo, S., Staehr Fenner, D., & Snyder, S. (2017). Understanding how culture impacts your expectations for your students handout.

Topic	Your Beliefs and/or Expectations
Student participation in discussions (What are your expectations for what student participation looks like during a class discussion?)	
Student non-verbal communication (What are your expectations for how students should communicate nonverbally with you and with other students?)	
Student interactions with teacher (What are your expectations in terms of how [or if] a student should address a teacher, ask questions or disagree with a teacher?)	

Topic	Your Beliefs and/or Expectations
Independent versus collaborative learning (What are your expectations for when students should work independently? What are your expectations for when and how they should look collaboratively?) 	
Plagiarism (What do you expect students to understand about what it means to plagiarize and how to avoid plagiarism?) 	

Table 2. Cultural Considerations

Topic	Cultural Considerations
Punctuality 	Chronemics refers to individuals' perceptions of time and whether the timing of things is seen as precise or more fluid. From culture to culture the importance of punctuality can vary greatly (Steinberg, 2007). In the United States, arriving more than several minutes late to a function can be considered rude. However, in other cultures (e.g., African, Middle Eastern, and Latin American), arriving late is not considered impolite.

Topic	Cultural Considerations
Role of teacher in class	The role of the teacher may vary between collectivist and individualist cultures. Collectivist cultures are those in which group goals and needs are generally placed above individual needs. In contrast, individualist cultures tend to value individual goals, individual rights, and independence. Students from collectivist cultures (e.g., Mexican, Korean, Somali) may have been taught that they should show respect for teachers at all times by carefully listening to their teacher and not asking questions or disagreeing (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008). Group harmony is considered most important. In contrast, students from individualist cultures (e.g., Australian, German, U.S.) recognize that they will be valued for speaking out for their unique ideas and opinions. They also tend to expect a more student-centered approach to teaching and learning.
Student participation in discussions	Whether ELs are from high context cultures or low context cultures may impact how they participate in discussions. In high context cultures (e.g., Afghanistan, El Salvadoran, Thai) it is expected that individuals will gain meaning from the context or situation, and some ideas may be assumed rather than stated. In contrast, members of low context cultures (e.g., Swiss, Israeli, U.S.), are less likely to rely on the situation and other contextual elements (e.g., body language or tone of voice) and tend to communicate information more directly. As a result, students from high context cultures may participate in discussions differently than students from low context cultures. In addition, students from a collectivist culture may believe that the survival and success of the group ensures the well-being of the individual, so that by considering the needs and feelings of others, one protects oneself. Harmony and interdependence of group members are stressed and valued. This sense of values may make it difficult for a student from a collectivist culture to disagree with another student (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008).
Student non-verbal communication	Nonverbal communication patterns can vary greatly from culture to culture, and the rules regarding these behaviors are often unspoken (Steinberg, 2007). ELs may need explicit guidance in cultural expectations in this area. For example, the personal distance that two speakers are expected to maintain when speaking may vary between cultures. In the United States, it is considered strange to stand extremely close to someone you are conversing with. Eye contact is another example. Some ELs may come from cultures where it is considered impolite to look an adult in the eye or direct eye contact is a perceived challenge (e.g., Asian, African, and Latino cultures). Eye contact between opposite sexes is often seen as inappropriate in Middle Eastern cultures.

Topic	Cultural Considerations
Student interactions with teacher	In some cultures there is greater "power distance" between leaders and followers than in other cultures. Power distance refers to how people from a specific culture view power relationships. For example, in high power distance cultures (e.g., Guatemalan, Malaysian, Saudi Arabian) the relationship between a teacher and a student would be very formal and respectful. In these cultures there tends to be more focus on titles, formality, and authority. Students from these cultures may not feel comfortable talking to teachers, and parents may take the teacher's word without question (Hofstede, 1980). In contrast, in cultures where there is less power distance (e.g., Dutch, Norwegian, U.S.) relationships are usually more informal. Parents may work together with teachers for the student's best interest, and the teacher may provide a more student-centered classroom, giving choice and autonomy to students.
Independent versus collaborative learning	Students from collectivist cultures (e.g., Japanese, Brazilian, and Indian) may value working together interdependently rather than working alone independently. Contributing to a group's well-being is valued more than one's individual achievement (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008). In contrast, students from individualist cultures (e.g., Greek, New Zealand, U.S.) may see greater value in working independently towards individual goals and achievement.
Plagiarism	The concept of plagiarism is built on the understanding that that ideas can be owned and that individuals have rights to intellectual property (Pennycook, 1996). These ideas may seem strange to students who have different cultural views about the nature of information and public discourse (Adiningrum & Kutieleh, 2011). Plagiarism tends to be culturally conditioned and may be understood differently in various cultures (Pennycook, 1996; Sowden; 2005). For example, in some Asian and Middle Eastern cultures, students are permitted to quote or paraphrase political and religious authorities without citing them specifically because it is understood that the reader will know the original source of the information (Howard, 1999). Additionally, ELs with lower levels of English proficiency may struggle to paraphrase challenging texts and will need significant support to do so.

Reflection Questions:

1. What did you notice about how your cultural beliefs and expectations may differ from those of your ELs?

2. How might you address these differences in your classroom?

References

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Tool #2: What I Know About My EL[2]

Name:	Country of birth:
Home language: Can student read and write in home language? _____ Fluently _____ Somewhat _____ No	English proficiency level: English language proficiency scores Composite (the combined score): Speaking: Reading Listening: Writing:
Educational experiences (e.g., amount of time in U.S. schools, educational experience in home country, any interrupted schooling):	
Family background (e.g., who student lives with, family separation/reunification):	
Student interests:	
Student plans and/or goals:	

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[2] Source: Staehr Fenner, D. & Snyder, S. (2017). *Unlocking English learners' potential: Strategies for making content accessible, p. 38.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Tool #3: Culturally Responsive School Checklist and Goal Setting

Look-Fors	Yes	Sometimes	No	To improve on how this guideline is incorporated in my classroom or school, I will…
Guideline #1: Culturally responsive teaching is assets-based.				
Administrators, teachers, and staff show interest in ELs' home languages by learning a few words or phrases.				
Administrators, teachers, and staff are aware of students' interests outside of the classroom or school setting.				
School uses many means of communicating with families (e.g., translated notes, telephone calls, using of an interpreter).				
Schools puts in place supports to help ELs and their families overcome obstacles that may get in the way of student learning or family participation.				
Guideline #2: Culturally responsive teaching places students at the center of the learning.				
The library and classrooms contain multicultural resources.				
Students' work is displayed throughout the school.				
The school curricula include opportunities for students to speak and write about their lives and people and events that are important to them.				
Students and their families are involved in setting goals for their learning and taking part in their assessment.				

Look-Fors	Yes	Sometimes	No	To improve on how this guideline is incorporated in my classroom or school, I will…
Guideline #3: Culturally responsive teaching values students' languages, cultures, and backgrounds.				
Students are provided role models that share their cultural background.				
Lessons and units include perspectives of individuals that come from ELs' home cultures (e.g., literature written by non-U.S. authors).				
Lessons include opportunities for ELs to use bilingual resources (e.g., dictionaries, books, glossaries) and home languages.				
Students' families and communities are included in the learning (e.g., community members are invited to speak in class).				
Guideline #4: Culturally responsive teaching simultaneously challenges and supports students.				
ELs are taught grade-level content and texts. Instructional texts include a balance of grade-level texts and texts at students' reading and language levels.				
Instruction and materials are appropriately scaffolded so students are able to access and engage with grade-level content and texts.				
School curriculum supports students in becoming socially and politically conscious				
Students have access to and the support needed to be successful in gifted, honors, and/or college-preparatory classes.				

Look-Fors	Yes	Sometimes	No	To improve on how this guideline is incorporated in my classroom or school, I will…

My top three priorities are….
 	
    1.
 	
    2.
 	
    3.
 	
I will take the following steps:				