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CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING A GUIDE TO DEEPENING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

In 2020, statistics released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revealed the emergence of a new pattern in racial and ethnic differences in Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) identification among 8-year-old children in the United States . For the first time, the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network reported that CDC data shows that the percentage of 8-year-old children identified with ASD is higher among Black, Hispanic, and Asian or Pacific Islander (A/PI) children than it is among White children¹. These findings are noteworthy as they likely reflect improvements in ASD awareness, identification, and access to services in communities serving Black, Hispanic, and A/PI children. The longstanding need of these communities served as the impetus for states and other countries to re-examine their practices and adopt new surveillance methods that underlie the above mentioned results.

Similarly, within the Quebec education system, with the presence of an increasingly ethno-culturally² and neurodiverse school population, there is a growing need to focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. Thus, educators must seek to provide meaningful and relevant social-learning experiences to students and create a sense of belonging, inclusion, and equity, as well as a more meaningful celebration of diversity^{1,3}. *Culturally responsive teaching* is one of those methodologies that serves the key goal of: "teaching that connects a student's social, cultural, family, or language background to what the student is learning; nurtures that cultural uniqueness; and responds by creating conditions in which the student's learning is enhanced."⁴

Culturally responsive teaching is a branch stemming from Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP) that was introduced by American pedagogical theorist, Gloria Ladson Billings, in the 1990s. Throughout her academic work, Prof. Billings looked deeper at the practices and methodologies of effective teachers of Black students to understand what was being done right. She found that effective teachers had high expectations of all students, presumed competency, valued the communities that their students came from, and integrated themselves in them^{5,6}. The 3 core components of CRP are:

Three Components of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy⁵

Student Learning	The students' intellectual growth and moral development, but also their ability to problem-solve and reason.
Cultural Competence	Skills that support students to affirm and appreciate their culture of origin while developing fluency in at least one other culture.
Critical Consciousness	The ability to identify, analyze, and solve real-world problems, especially those that result in societal inequalities.

In 2000, Geneva Gay, an American author and academic, coined the term *culturally responsive teaching*; writing that “when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference for students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest and appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly.”⁶ According to Gay (2000), in order to demonstrate *culturally responsive teaching*, educators should:

- 1** Have a strong knowledge base about cultural diversity which is reflected by understanding different racial and ethnic groups' cultural values, traditions, and contributions to society, as well as incorporating them into their instruction.
- 2** Utilize culturally relevant curricula that includes multiple perspectives in their instruction and ensures the images displayed in classrooms — such as on bulletin boards — represent a wide range of diversity. Culturally relevant curricula also refers to contextualizing issues within race, class, ethnicity, and gender.
- 3** Have high expectations for all students and help them achieve academic success while still validating their cultural identities.
- 4** Have an understanding of and an appreciation for different communication styles and modify their classroom interactions accordingly. For example, many communities of color have an active, participatory style of communication. An educator who doesn't understand this cultural characteristic might think a vocal student is being rude and tell the student to be quiet. The student may then shut down.

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Utilize multicultural instructional examples by connecting students' prior knowledge and cultural experiences with new knowledge. Incorporating culturally relevant word problems can be a strategy to draw on past experiences. For example, during geometry class, why not ask students to measure the length of the turban needed to fit a 52 cm head if it had 5 layers?

LBPSB, through its Task Force on the Equity, Diversity, Dignity, and Inclusion (EDDI) initiative, has already begun to provide many different professional development opportunities on culturally responsive practices/pedagogy to professionals, administrators and teachers. It has also embraced many of the core characteristics of CRP and *culturally responsive teachings*, such as creating learning environments where all students are encouraged to achieve their full potential, where **inclusion** is understood as *'belonging before achieving'* and where **diversity** is viewed as a *'normalized difference'* and cultural differences are looked at as a source of richness rather than a hurdle to overcome⁷.

In keeping with our commitment to EDDI, this newsletter is dedicated to autistic voices that need to be heard in order to inform our future practices and help us make the right improvements.

In the following section we highlight the initiative that the CoEASD hosted to kick off the 2023-2024 academic year. On August 29th, the Centre presented a webinar with Kaelynn Partlow, who was a participant on Netflix's *Love on the Spectrum* series. Here are Kaelynn's **Top 10 Tips** for educators who want to start their year off right:

TOP 10 TIPS FROM KAELYNN PARTLOW

1 Communication

Use direct, clear, and concise language to address autistic individuals, such as: "Look at me!" or "Look at the menu and pick one!". Another way to improve communication is by using declarative statements when making *social demands* to make them more "social" and less "demanding".

2 Change

Change can be difficult for autistic individuals. One way to counter this characteristic is through establishing routines. Remember, when the individual is frustrated due to a change in routine, it is important to validate their emotion, present the available choices, and wait.

3 Meltdowns

It is helpful to provide calming choices for autistic individuals during a meltdown to help regulate. A key factor to consider is the importance of identifying the precipitating event that may have taken place earlier in the day that could have contributed to the meltdown.

4 Behaviour Momentum

Limitations in executive functioning can make initiating and completing a task difficult. Kaelynn suggests using easier tasks to set the table for more challenging ones, noting that "It is easy to keep going if we've already started".



5 Sensory

Autistic individuals might be sensory seekers or avoiders. Make visual choices available to them so that they can verbalize seeking or avoiding a specific sensation. Ms. Partlow encourages engaging in those sensory needs as long as they are sanitary, safe, and socially accepted.

6 Decision Making

Making up one's mind can be a challenging task for autistic individuals. Kaelynn clearly conveyed this to us by stating: "If you can't do it internally, you have to do it externally" when she discussed the importance of having choice boards as visual menus for indecisive autistic children to select from.

7 Goal Setting

It is imperative to use strength-based approaches to develop meaningful goals for autistic individuals to ensure that they are motivated to achieve them.

8 Perseveration

As explained by Ms. Partlow, perseveration comes from a place of anxiety and restlessness. She suggests allowing autistic individuals to engage in the activity, on which they are hyperfocused for a preassigned period of time, and then redirecting them to a different activity that involves movement and concentration.

9 Planned Ignoring

Planned ignoring is a strategy used to decrease the occurrence of a problem behaviour. Kaelynn highlights the importance of teaching lagging skills that are causing the individuals to engage in that inappropriate behaviour. This strategy is used to ignore the behaviour, not the individual.

10 Accommodations

Accommodations are often wrongfully viewed as taking the easy way out. It is important to remember that for autistic students, accommodations do not make tasks easier, rather they make them attainable. Consider this, crutches do not make walking any easier, but they allow the action of walking possible when mobility is compromised. The same applies to accommodations for ASD students.

READ ALL ABOUT IT

Now that Summer is over, it's time to get back to books... Here are a few of our favourite suggestions written by autistic authors!

- **I Am Strong: The Life and Journey of an Autistic Pastor** by Dr. Lamar Hardwick
- **Sincerely, Your Autistic Child** by multiple authors
- **Different, Not Less: A neurodivergent's guide to embracing your true self and finding your happily ever after** by Chloe Hayden
- **Ten Steps to Nanette: A Memoir Situation** by Hannah Gadsby
- **Odd Girl Out** by Laura James
- **Leah's Voice** by Lori DeMonia
- **Rules** by Cynthia Lord
- **All My Stripes** by Shaina Rudolph & Danielle Royer





LISTEN TO THIS



“As a Black, femme, Autistic, there is a lot of water to tread, a lot of barriers to overcome, and a lot of sociocultural and sociopolitical ammunition to oppress and marginalize – both within and outside of non-intersectional disabled communities. And even if I were to reduce my focus to those identities I wear “out loud” – gender, race, and disability as it intertwines with my autism – there is still a complete absence of research on Autistics who share these lived experiences.”

ChrisTiana ObeySumner ⁸



Similar to ChrisTiana, Tiffany Hammond, a social activist, a mother, and an author shares her story with Barry Prizant and Dave Finch. This compelling Uniquely Human podcast offers firsthand information about Tiffany's experience of being Black and on the spectrum, as well as insight into why and how she has dedicated her life to challenge the current perception of Autism as a lifelong burden. She also discusses the concept of intersectionality and how racial representations are scarce in the autism workforce, leaving her with a feeling that her children and herself are misunderstood most of the time. Finally, Tiffany states that her most fundamental goal is to create "a community that is worthy of my children's membership"⁹, where they are valued for who they are beyond race, gender, ability, or other socially constructed systems.

WEBSITES:



- 1) <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/addm-community-report/spotlight-on-racial-ethnic-differences.html>
- 2) <https://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021-Task-Force-Final-Report.pdf>
- 3) <https://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/equity-diversity-dignity-and-inclusion/>
- 4) <https://www.ednet.ns.ca/psp/equity-inclusive-education/culturally-responsive-pedagogy>
- 5) <https://www.cde.ca.gov/>
- 6) <https://www.edweek.org/>
- 7) <https://www.lbpsb.qc.ca/wp-content/uploads/EDDI-Commitment.pdf>
- 8) <https://southseattleemerald.com/2018/12/05/intersectionality-what-it-means-to-be-autistic-femme-and-black/>
- 9) <https://uniquelyhuman.com/2023/03/31/being-black-before-autistic-tiffany-hammond/>
- 10) <https://fondationjasminroy.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Guide-pictogrammes-autochtones-HR.pdf>

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The Centre of Excellence for Autism Spectrum Disorder Presents:

INTEROCEPTION, THE 8TH SENSE: THE SCIENCE OF HOW WE EACH UNIQUELY FEEL

****OPQ ACCREDITED CONFERENCE****

Interoception is an important sensory system that helps us to feel internal body signals like a full bladder, a growling stomach, tense muscles, or a speeding heart. Research indicates that our ability to clearly notice and interpret these internal body signals enables us to accurately identify and manage how we feel: Are we anxious? Getting frustrated? Hungry? Full? In pain? Needing the bathroom?

Interoception differences are commonly experienced by autistic people and can have a significant impact on their quality of life. This course will provide an overview of what the latest research tells us about interoception, as well as how this important sense influences our ability to recognize, understand, regulate, and/or communicate how we feel. An evidence-based framework for supporting interoception connection will be shared, including multiple strategies for nurturing the 3 main aspects of interoceptive awareness: body, emotion, action.



Kelly Mahler OTD, OTR/L

Kelly Mahler OTD, OTR/L, earned a Doctorate in Occupational Therapy from Misericordia University, Dallas, PA. She has been an occupational therapist for 20 years, serving school-aged children and adults. Kelly is winner of multiple awards, including the 2020 American Occupational Therapy Association Emerging and Innovative Practice Award & a Mom's Choice Gold Medal. She is an adjunct faculty member at Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA as well as at Misericordia University, Dallas, PA. Kelly is a co-principal investigator in several research projects pertaining to topics such as interoception, self-regulation, trauma & autism.



April 25, 2024



Live webinar

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