

# Culturally Mediated Instruction

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## 5. Culturally Mediated Instruction

"Ongoing multicultural activities within the classroom setting engender a natural awareness of cultural history, values and contributions."

-- Kathleen Serverian-Wilmeth (\*)

### WHAT

Instruction is culturally mediated when it incorporates and integrates diverse ways of knowing, understanding, and representing information. Instruction and learning take place in an environment that encourages multicultural viewpoints and allows for inclusion of knowledge that is relevant to the students. Learning happens in culturally appropriate social situations; that is, relationships among students and those between teachers and students are congruent with students' cultures.

### WHY

Students need to understand that there is more than one way to interpret a statement, event, or action. By being allowed to learn in different ways or to share viewpoints and perspectives in a given situation based on their own cultural and social experiences, students become active participants in their learning (Nieto, 1996). Hollins (1996) believes that culturally mediated instruction provides the best learning conditions for all students. It may help decrease the number of incidences of unacceptable behavior from students who are frustrated with instruction not meeting their needs. Also, students from cultural groups who are experiencing academic success will be less inclined to form stereotypes about students from other cultures.

### HOW

1. Research students' experiences with learning and teaching styles
  - Ask educators who come from the same cultural background as the students about effective ways to teach them
  - Visit the communities of the students to find out how they interact and learn in that environment
  - Ask students about their learning style preferences
  - Interview parents about how and what students learn from them
2. Devise and implement different ways for students to be successful in achieving developmental milestones
  - Ensure success by setting realistic, yet rigorous, goals for individual students
  - Allow students to set their own goals for a project
  - Allow the use of the student's first language to enhance learning
3. Create an environment that encourages and embraces culture
  - Employ patterns of management familiar to students
  - Allow students ample opportunities to share their cultural knowledge
  - Question and challenge students on their beliefs and actions
  - Teach students to question and challenge their own beliefs and actions

### References

Hollins, E. R. (1996). *Culture in school learning: Revealing the deep meaning*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Nieto, S. (1996). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education* (2nd ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.

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