CES Benchmarks Reflection and Self-Assessment Tool

The Benchmarks serve an important function as a tool for reflective and self-assessment. This tool is intended to support focused reflection, to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to guide the work.

The tool provided here is divided into two parts. The first part asks that you reflect on your practices-- **Where do we see this in our/my practice? Where do we see potential to improve this practice? What challenges do you face?** Then, based upon these reflections, it asks you to choose up to 3 priority areas on which to focus. The purpose to prioritizing is to decide which practice to focus on in order to improve practice with the highest leverage to create a more equitable classroom and school.

If you are working together as a school community to use these benchmarks to focus your priorities, you might use the following process:
1.   Decide which practice to focus on in order to improve practice with the highest leverage to create a more equitable school.
a.   Examine the rankings and discuss if there are ratings that are surprising or unexpected.
b.   What is most important in terms of creating a more equitable school? Post the benchmarks descriptors around the room and have people stand by the area they find most important, or have people posts dots on the wall next to the area they think is most important. Then have each small group discuss amongst themselves and then share with the larger group why they believe this is the highest leverage area. Each group shares – people can ask question, then after each group shares and give the community a chance to change groups.
c.   Have a large group discussion that enables your school to choose two areas to work on.

The second part of this document helps you to plan to address this priority area. It guides you through a modified cycle of inquiry, from stating a problem, determining the most likely solution, creating a plan, and learning from your actions.

	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	*CES Common Principles* ▪ **Goals apply to all students** ▪ **Personalization** ▪ **A tone of decency and trust** ▪ **Democracy and equity**
Coalition of Essential Schools		

Culture is central to learning. It plays a role not only in communicating and receiving information but also in shaping the thinking process of groups and individuals. A pedagogy that acknowledges, responds to, and celebrates fundamental cultures offers full, equitable access to education for students from all cultures and prepares students to live in a pluralistic society. **Culturally responsive teaching** is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Transforming descriptors	**Where do we see this in our/my practice?**	**Where do we see potential to improve this practice? What challenges do you face?**	**Priority (mark your top 3 priorities)**
Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) **uses the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them**; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students.			
Culturally responsive teaching **acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages (language, history, traditions) of different racial, ethnic, class, religious, and gender groups,** both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes, and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the formal curriculum. Culturally responsive teaching builds on and expands students' social capital. It provides students with examples of difference, such as building intergenerational relationships.			
Culturally responsive teaching **builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school** experiences, between academic abstractions and lived socio-cultural realities, and between school experiences and youth culture.			
The school community uses best practices in **language acquisition** to support academic development and support in both English and native languages.			

Transforming descriptors	Where do we see this in our/my practice?	Where do we see potential to improve this practice? What challenges do you face?	Priority (mark your top 3 priorities)
Specific culturally responsive pedagogical practices include an **anti-bias pedagogy**, positive perspectives on parents and families of culturally and linguistically diverse students, culturally mediated instruction that teaches students to know and praise their own and each other's cultural heritage and historic contributions, communicates high expectations, and uses a **wide variety of active instructional strategies** that are connected to different learning styles. Culturally responsive teaching **incorporates multicultural information, resources, and materials** in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools.			
Culturally responsive teachers develop intellectual, social, emotional, and political learning by **using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.** Culturally responsive teachers realize not only the importance of academic achievement but also that of **maintaining of cultural identity and heritage**.			
Culturally responsive teaching creates **curriculum** that invites students to explore complex identities and consider racial group experiences, analyzes opportunity denial, represents a diverse range of people thoroughly and complexly, and discusses history accurately and thoroughly.			
Culturally responsive teaching is **transformative** in that it involves helping students to develop the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become social critics who can make reflective decisions and implement their decisions in effective personal, social, political, and economic action.			
CRT guides students in understanding that no single version of "the truth" is total and permanent. It **does not solely prescribe mainstream ways of knowing and making meaning**. Instead, it presents multiple perspectives on a situation or idea and supports student understanding of them all. Culturally responsive teaching is a movement against and beyond boundaries of traditional ways of knowing. It is that movement that makes education the practice of freedom.			

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Priority Area

Description (rewrite from previous page):

Write a Problem Statement

Define a problem statement that identifies patterns in student achievement, skill gaps, and links them to related gaps in teacher practice and/or school practice(s). State the problem in the form of a question. Stating the problem clearly as a question focuses efforts on generating hypotheses and searching for causes.

What is the likely cause to this problem?

Brainstorm hypotheses. Why does the problem exist? Generate a number of different hypotheses.
Prioritize, test, and confirm hypotheses. Which hypotheses seem most plausible? Test each hypothesis to see which ones appear to be accurate explanations for why the challenge area exists. For each hypothesis, look for concrete evidence or data that is the source of the challenge problem (such as focus groups, alumni interviews, relevant quantitative data, etc).

What is the most likely solution to this problem?

What is the most likely cause to this problem statement that, if addressed, would be most likely to create equitable outcomes for your students? **The solutions** should clearly address the challenge area and the causes of the problem.

How will you build your capacity to implement this solution?

What skills do you need to develop to effectively help you implement your solution? Who can help you? What resources do you need? What is your timeline?

What do you need to do to implement this solution?

The action plan should be based on the solution(s) and available resources. Identify the goals of the action plan, an implementation strategy to solve the problem based on the solution(s), and guidelines for evaluating the plan. A detailed plan of action should include timelines, person(s) responsible, and resources needed. Do you have the capacity to implement your plan?

Implications and Learnings

What did you learn from this process? What did you learn from implementing your plan? Problems often stand on the intersection with other problems ad can be impacted by other forces and dynamics in the school community and culture. How might you evaluate the impact of your work? How did it impact your practice?