Subject Area Strategies: Observations

Your Name:

Now it’s your turn to observe an upcoming lesson focused on more subject-specific, culturally responsive strategies.

To start with, we’ve included bullet points here listing culturally responsive strategies in specific subject areas. Look at the attributes of culturally responsive practice in the subject area you will be observing. Pick at least 2 strategies that you want to look out for during your observation. If the subject area you will be observing isn’t one listed here, please pick the strategies that make the most sense for your context.

*Strategies for Culturally Responsive* ***Mathematics***

* Set up authentic, relevant reasons for learning math
* Use a range of representations
* Be clear, explicit, and direct with math terminology
* Activate and validate the knowledge and experience students bring to school with them
* Share local Native mathematical systems, e.g., for counting or record keeping
* Help students think about and solve meaningful math problems
* Support students’ understanding of how mathematics is related to familiar contexts
* Extend notions of expertise beyond the academic arena
* Invite community members to speak in class on how they use math

*Strategies for Culturally Responsive* ***Science***

* Start with an ecological perspective, focused on how species within an ecosystem depend and impact one another
* Incorporate the Native perspective that people are a part *of* nature rather than apart *from* nature
* Teach science in a way that is relevant to students’ communities and the socio-scientific challenges they face.
* Set up science activities where students can contribute to the pursuit of possible solutions to community problems
* Avoid curricular materials that are against spiritual or moral beliefs and/or give students a choice in using alternate materials, e.g., instead of animal dissection.

*Strategies for Culturally Responsive* ***Social Studies***

* Teach from multicultural perspective to include, for example, authors and worldviews from different cultures
* Assure historical accuracy of events related to Native peoples
* Allow time for Native American history and culture
* Teach Native American contributions
* Teach about tribal governments
* Focus on both the past and the present
* Teach about general history and culture related to Native peoples *and* the attributes of specific, local tribal nations, including their history and contemporary context

*Strategies for Culturally Responsive* ***English Language Arts***

* Include literary themes written by and about Native Americans
* Provide background information about particular tribes in the reading
* Provide learning experiences where students feel a connection to the content and have something to say about it
* Share a rationale for choosing a particular text format with students or engage them in a conversation about it
* Explicitly teach how to engage with school-based texts
* Map students’ everyday practices with texts onto school-based literary skills and modes of reasoning

*Strategies for Culturally Responsive* ***Native Language***

* Develop instructional activities that require the use of the target language
* Teach Native language in the context of traditional cultural activities
* Provide contexts where students learn appropriate uses of the language, how to use it with different community members, and gain an understanding of the significance of cultural practices
* Invite elders to come to the classroom to tell stories and talk with students
* Take students to visit with elders in their own setting

***Problem/Place-based Activity***

We recommend teachers try out a problem/place-based activity in their classroom. Hopefully you will have an opportunity to observe one! Here are the steps followed in the problem/place-based activity shown in the video. Teachers may follow these steps or adapt them for their own classroom.

1. Develop and share a problem statement
2. Develop and share a question to guide students’ inquiry
3. In small groups, students discuss what information they need to gather - what specific questions they have
4. Each student chooses one of the questions generated by their group to research
5. Students research their question (with help from peers if they choose) and present their findings back to their group
6. Groups share their collective work, including documentation of their process and findings, on a class wall
7. Students give one another feedback on their work
8. Groups revise their work and put it in a presentation
9. Groups present their projects to the class, parents, and selected community members
10. Students do individual write ups of their project, focused on their contribution and learning

**Planning for your Observation**

What is the subject area and grade of the lesson you will be observing?

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What is the topic of the lesson and any goals the teacher may have for their practice and student learning?

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Choose at least 2-3 culturally responsive strategies you plan to look for in the upcoming lesson.

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What do you think these strategies may look like at different levels of practice: beginning, maturing, and advanced?

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**Conduct your Observation!** Look for the strategies you’ve identified and the level of practice.