Core Function → **Domain 3: Instructional Transformation**

Effective Practice → **Provide rigorous evidence-based instruction - Curriculum and Instructional Planning**

Indicator: Instructional teams and teachers utilize culturally relevant examples in curriculum and instruction to strengthen student learning. (6826)

Explanation: Research suggests that teachers who provide culturally relevant teaching by incorporating students' culture into the curriculum can enhance student outcomes. Using culturally relevant Instructional materials can foster student learning but these materials are frequently lacking within schools. Instructional teams must carefully review curriculum and instruction to be sure that it minimizes bias and stereotyping, includes representations of diverse peoples and cultures, and includes plenty of culturally relevant examples to enhance student learning.

Questions: *Has the school reviewed curriculum and instruction to ensure that culturally relevant examples are frequently included? Do instructional materials, curricula, and lesson plans include representations of diverse cultures and discussions about controversial issues such as racism to promote student learning? What steps should the school take to review curriculum with a critical eye to ensure it promotes culturally inclusive practices? Are instructional materials free of bias and stereotypes, and if not, are they highlighted by teachers and discussed with students? Are the issues and perspectives of minority students regularly incorporated in lesson plans and activities?*

Instructional transformation requires system-wide changes in classroom instruction, including the use of evidence-based practices when planning curriculum and instruction (Herman et al., 2008; The Center on School Turnaround, 2017). Schools must set high academic standards, and incorporate research-supported curriculum and instruction that allows access for all learners, irrespective of cultural or linguistic background (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Drake, 2007; The Center on School Turnaround, 2017). School improvement requires a thorough analysis of the school's curriculum, lesson plans, and learning experiences to verify that they are standards-based and have built-in supports to ensure access for all students (Drake, 2007; Herman et al., 2008). Research has shown, however, that schools often lack culturally relevant curricula and supports to address the diverse needs of their students (Council of the Great City Schools, 2017; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Rumberger, 2008; Movit, Petrykowska, & Woodruff, 2010), and instructional teams and teachers must be sure to use culturally relevant examples in curriculum and instruction to strengthen their students' learning (Sleeter, 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Identifying and developing ways to effectively teach diverse groups of students arose as a new movement in the 1980s, following the onset of school desegregation efforts (Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Several major research efforts emerged addressing culturally relevant education, including culturally responsive teaching (CRT) (Dover, 2013; Gay, 2010, 2013), and culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2014). Gay (2013) describes culturally responsive teaching (CRT) as "using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them" (pp. 49–50). Ladson-Billing's framework, though similar, focused on the attitudes and dispositions that a teacher might adopt which would influence planning, instruction, and assessment (Ladson-Billings, 1994). However, both research strands seek to validate students' cultures by creating bridges between school and home through the use of diversi-

fied instructional strategies and curricula towards the broader goal of culturally responsive education (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 2014). CRT has been used successfully across a variety of content areas. A recent research synthesis revealed that CRT practices generally led to improvements in teachers' capacity for critical reflection and cultural competence, positive affective changes in students, and some evidence of improved student learning (Aronson & Laughter 2016). However, very few studies have explicitly and rigorously linked CRT practices to student achievement and/or standards-based learning (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Lee, 2010; Sleeter, 2012).

Culturally responsive curricula include culturally relevant examples of the histories and views of marginalized people of color who are framed as active agents within history and society (Banks, 2006; Howard, 2004). A variety of studies have demonstrated how using culturally relevant materials can engage students and promote success (e.g., Bui & Fagan, 2013; Choi, 2013; Feger, 2006; Souryasack & Lee, 2007). Unfortunately, culturally relevant and historically accurate curricula and assessments are often scarce, particularly at the secondary level (Council of the Great City Schools, 2017; Gándara, Maxwell-Jolly, & Rumberger, 2008; Movit, Petrykowska, & Woodruff, 2010). Researchers have noted that instructional materials often do not allow students to feel connected to the curriculum as they frequently do not represent diverse cultures or address controversial issues such as racism (Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson, 2011; Loewen, 2007, as cited in Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Ndura, 2004). Textbooks and state learning standards often represent people of color as marginal to the "true story" of national progress, which, when coupled with teachers' fear of encouraging painful or difficult conversations about race, often leads to the absence of discussion about people of color in history classrooms (Branch, 2003; Loewen, 2007). For example, history textbooks often distort historical contexts leading up to some of today's most dire social ills, such as some textbooks' portrayal of the South's secession from the U.S. prior to the Civil War as a decision to maintain state's rights, rather than preserve slavery (Wong, 2015).

CRT requires that Instructional materials and assessments convey respect for diverse cultures and are culturally relevant to the students served. Instructional materials (including digital) should be free of negative stereotypes, and address sensitive topics with respect and historical accuracy, including carefully chosen videos and images to develop students' background and provide context (Council of the Great City Schools, 2017). Teachers and school leaders can review curricula for anti-bias, historical accuracy, and cultural relevance by addressing questions such as (adapted from Krasnoff, 2016):

1. Does the curriculum provide for a balanced study of cultures and viewpoints, and include learning activities that promote appreciation for all cultures?
2. Does the curriculum include information about the past and present experiences of people from different cultural backgrounds? Of both women and men? Is textbook information fragmented or isolated by being placed in a box or chapter separate from the text's main body?
3. Are opportunities to explore the perspectives of individuals from different backgrounds included?
4. Are issues and perspectives of minority groups included?
5. If the curriculum contains biased information or stereotypes, is this pointed out and are students provided with more accurate information?
6. Do classroom displays and instructional materials include positive representations of diverse international and domestic cultures?

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