



Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching Can Improve Reading

What Is Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching?

If you take a moment to imagine “acceptable behavior” in most classrooms, you might picture students sitting quietly while they work, being encouraged to raise their hands before speaking, and perhaps only talking to each other when they have their heads together in a small group. This may be a model of order for many teachers, but think about some of the behaviors that underlie that scene and ask yourself the following:

- Do you prefer a quiet or noisy atmosphere?
- Do you prefer speaking or writing?
- Do you prefer working alone or in a group?
- Do you prefer competition or collaboration?
- Do you prefer standing or sitting?
- Do you prefer to be active or restive?

These seem like simple questions, but our answers come from deeply personal experiences that inform the way we interact with the world. That is, they come from our culture or, as our advisor Dr. Sharoky Hollie puts it, our rings of culture. More than just food, holidays, or ethnicity, these include gender, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, religion, and others (Hollie, 2017).

Now think about 30 students—with equal capacity and excitement to learn—who have different answers to those and many more questions that result in “unacceptable classroom behavior.” Some of these students might exhibit behavior such as interrupting, not sitting still, or attention-seeking. Rather than viewing these students and behaviors through the deficit model of unacceptability, Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching (CLRT) validates and affirms them.

Use Protocols That Meet the Needs of All Students

In order to increase engagement and validate cultural and linguistic behaviors, specific protocols are included in the lesson. To further customize activities for your students, consider optional protocols listed on pp. A42–A45.

PROTOCOL	SESSION	VALIDATES
Shout Out	1	spontaneity, multiple ways to show focus
Merry-Go-Round Share	1, 4	multiple ways to show focus, connectedness
Individual Think Time	1	independence
Stand and Share	1, 3, 5	spontaneity, movement, connectedness
Pick a Stick	2, 3, 4	spontaneity
Silent Appointment	2	social interaction, nonverbal expression
Musical Shares	2, 6	movement, musicality, social interaction
Thumbs-Up	3	connectedness

When students are validated and affirmed, they are viewed through an asset model instead of a deficit model—they are more engaged and eager to learn. *Magnetic Reading* includes specific protocols that validate different student behaviors and guidance for teachers about customizing the protocols to their students. These protocols are additive to instruction and fun for everyone. Protocols like Musical Shares, Vote with Your Feet, and Jump in Reading add a dynamic element to the classroom that kids enjoy for different reasons. This brings us back to the original point: Children differ, and we validate and affirm these differences.

How Does CLRT Benefit Students and Teachers?

When students are validated and affirmed with CLRT protocols, they feel recognized and valued rather than alienated. Because they feel valued as learners, they are more engaged to learn. The more teachers learn about using CLRT protocols—that is, the better they get at recognizing their students' behaviors as assets to learning and choosing protocols for them—the more engaged in learning *everyone* becomes. One of the outcomes of a large 2016 study in which teachers underwent training in CLRT was that teachers had learned “the importance of valuing students' cultures and experiences and building positive relationships with students” (Powell, Cantrell, Malo-Juvera, & Correll, 2016).

Can CLRT Improve Student Reading?

As educators, we want to improve engagement for students and teachers in every domain, but with *Magnetic Reading* we're focused on student achievement in reading. In the article mentioned above, students with teachers who identified as “high implementers” of the CLRT program scored significantly higher on spring MAP testing in reading than students with teachers who were “low implementers” of the CLRT program (Powell et al., 2016). Put another way, the kids with teachers who took CLRT seriously got better at reading than the kids with teachers who didn't.



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References

- Hollie, S. (2017). *Culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning: Classroom practices for student success*. Teacher Created Materials.
- Powell, R., Cantrell, S. C., Malo-Juvera, V., & Correll, P. (2016). Operationalizing culturally responsive instruction: Preliminary findings of CRIOP research. *Teachers College Record*, 118(1), 1–46.