

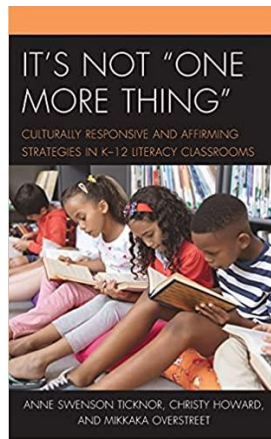
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Review of *It's not "One More Thing": Culturally Responsive and Affirming Strategies in K-12 Literacy Classrooms*

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Ticknor, A. S., Howard, C., & Overstreet, M. (2021). *It's not "one more thing": Culturally responsive and affirming strategies in K-12 literacy classrooms*. Rowman & Littlefield.

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Ticknor, Howard, and Overstreet (2021) assert the importance of disrupting K-12 literacy instruction by embedding culturally responsive strategies in everyday thinking and not as "one more thing." The authors assert that culturally responsive instruction is essential in the process of learning by connecting families and schools. To meet this goal, they use a social justice lens defined by Nieto and Bode (2012), incorporating "a philosophy, an approach, and actions that embody treating all people with fairness, respect, dignity, and generosity" (p. 12). They use the term "culturally responsive," citing Gay (2018), Ladson-Billings (1995), and Paris and Alim (2017) as scholars who have described culturally responsive pedagogies—specifically framing their use of culturally responsive pedagogy as defined by Gay (2018) to "advocate affirming students' cultures in a way that values the experiences and communities of the individuals within our classrooms" (p. xvi). They situate culturally responsive instruction to emphasize the importance of identity work with educators and students. The authors focus on material selection for literacy instruction, instructional language, and reading response instructional practices to provide opportunities for teachers to make the best decisions for their classrooms.

The authors begin by establishing the definitions of culturally responsive instruction and the importance of identity work. They follow with a section that situates their work as university professors working with preservice (PST) or in-service teachers in the southern United States. They state that the students they teach vary in age, experiences, and identities. The majority of their students are white and female, which mirrors the teaching population in the U.S. Next, they discuss the larger conversation about how the demographics of students are the most diverse they have ever been, while teacher demographics have not changed. The authors call out inequities in education or instructional practices that do not recognize all students' funds of knowledge (Moll et

al., 1992) that may vary by lived experiences and have been historically silenced. The authors discuss the need to disrupt teachers' preconceptions about students' communities and cultures that might differ from their own experiences. The authors state that supporting educators means you might have to "challenge and change unjust teaching practices to disrupt inequitable literacy instruction for K-12 students" (p. xxv). The book includes ways for teachers to engage in meaningful discussions about diversity and culturally responsive instruction through material selection for literacy instruction, instructional language, and reading response.

The main underpinnings of this book are rooted in the authors' backgrounds in education. Collectively, they have been educators for over 20 years in various roles, such as K-12 teachers, literacy consultants, literacy professors, and teacher educators. As professors and teacher educators, they believe that culturally responsive instruction is crucial in education to provide for the diverse needs of students that address the curriculum standards and provide high-quality literacy instruction. The authors position their experiences in education and as educators to support their purpose for this book. The authors do this through advocating for LGBTQ or other marginalized communities by providing a curriculum that is a window into cultural communities different from their own. The examples given connect the research to strategies from personal experiences, making the content meaningful and applicable to educators in various contexts.

There are two major goals of the book the authors set out to meet. First, the examples given of culturally responsive lessons and activities are to help guide educators. They provide guiding principles that emphasize culturally responsive instruction is not one-size-fits-all. Culturally responsive instruction is not activities; they embedded it as foundational to

one's pedagogy. Culturally responsive instruction is not just for "those kids," and culturally responsive instruction is not "one more thing" (p.61). Second, they want to provide tangible models of how culturally responsive teaching looks in practice and move away from explanations of why it is important.

This book provides real-world examples of culturally responsive lessons and activities that the authors have implemented in their K-12 classrooms. These examples are concrete and applicable. The authors do not have a one-size-fits-all example, because the educator needs to get to know their students to understand what will work. Instead, the authors want educators to be more aware of how they approach and implement inclusive and culturally responsive instruction. The authors suggest educators consider students' homes and community when selecting material for literacy instruction to connect schools. Centering students' experiences opens up opportunities to connect knowledge to students' needs and interests. They discuss that premade examples of content might be cute, but do they leverage your students' total funds of knowledge. Moll et al. (1992) is cited to discuss total funds of knowledge, meaning knowledge that includes cultural and community experiences. The larger question of "Whose knowledge matters?" is worth investigating. The authors highlight that the material often provided by teachers privileges white, middle-class, Christian norms. It would help if you normalized diversity and set the tone that all belong in the curriculum. Moving the discussion of why to do culturally responsive teaching is important to practice culturally responsive literacy instruction.

The chapters are framed by Bishops' (1990) concept of mirrors and windows. A lesson might include a mirror, where the child sees themselves included, or a window, where the child sees into someone else's life. The book chapters focus on three major areas in literacy instruction: material selection for literacy

instruction, instructional language, and reading response. This variation provides the readers with evidence of specific books and activities to implement, but most importantly, methods of critically thinking about the content you use.

Building upon Johnston's *Choice Words* (2004) and *Opening Minds* (2012), the authors add a layer of cultural responsiveness to emphasize the importance of language choice with culturally responsive teaching. The goal of instructional language should disrupt the status quo, highlighting the need for different areas of instruction. The teacher may provide counterstorytelling through conversations based on topics in books. The authors state that culturally dismissive instructional talk ignores students' identities and lived experiences conveying beliefs to students of what identities are accepted and which are not. Instead of dismissing opportunities to discuss diverse and possibly uncomfortable conversations, they use the strategy to redirect, scaffold, or affirm language with their preservice and in-service teachers. Meaning when they hear the language used to instruct, they will redirect, offer supportive alternatives, scaffold, provide support in some regions of speech, or affirm and encourage what has been said. They give examples of what they tell their PSTs and demonstrate how they redirect, scaffold, or affirm language.

Besides the examples given in the chapters, the authors include stop and reflect questions to dig deeper into the content. They have questions at the end of each chapter for the reader. These questions are to guide the reader to reflect on their practices or to engage in a class discussion. The authors also include examples of resources and facilitative texts that can explore topics more in-depth. They covered race, ethnicities, languages, gender identities, sexual orientation, and abilities.

I engaged with this text as a former practitioner in a public school K-12 setting and as a current university professor and teacher educator. As an elementary school teacher, it often troubled me when the curriculum was not relatable to my students. I often had a curriculum that included windows but not mirrors in stories or topics. I often found myself supplementing curriculum to meet the needs of all my multicultural and multilingual students. As a Puerto Rican, bilingual female in those settings, I also had a keen awareness of monolithic instruction that was unquestionably taught. Thus, I appreciate the discussion of the importance and richness that community knowledge brings to learning, and the need to disrupt current literacy instruction and challenge the status quo. At the same time, the chapters became repetitive and, although many wonderful supports are built into the chapters, they could be organized more practically. Many of the examples were geared to elementary students and educators. Although they included some secondary examples and resources, secondary educators might have to modify and adapt the examples to their

learning environments to better match the needs of their students.

This book is fashioned to explain how to do culturally responsive instruction with relevant examples. The authors achieve this by first giving real-world scenarios, followed by their lens to engage with the instruction critically. The book offers classroom scenarios, and the authors discuss the strengths and limitations of the lesson—provided in the example—and how to build upon it with culturally relevant instruction. As educators look to implement these literacy practices, the authors offer many instructional strategies and resources that educators could modify and apply in their classrooms. As educators welcome students back into traditional learning environments, they must consider all their funds of knowledge. Students will seek opportunities to connect with others and see themselves reflected in their learning. This book offers informative insight and dialogue, and is worth reading, reflecting, and acting upon.

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