



## **Culturally Responsive Education: *Facing Pushback***

**How can we talk to our community, our schools and our elected officials about culturally responsive education (CRE)? How can we prepare for the doubts and attacks we may hear? Here are some examples of what we might hear and how we can PUSHBACK on the pushback!**

***“Some of our schools have a dozen ethnicities within a single classroom. There’s no way to teach everyone’s culture.”***

CRE doesn’t require that teachers know everything about each student’s culture. Research tells us that one of the most effective ways to close achievement gaps is to build positive, intentional relationships between teachers and students; this requires teachers to know and value who their students are and where they come from. When teachers truly know the assets, interests, and passions of their students, they can leverage them in supporting students’ academic growth. CRE requires that teachers understand how who they are impacts how they teach. It asks teachers to reflect on and address their own implicit biases, which can negatively impact their teaching.

***“Are you saying all our teachers are racist?”***

No, but I am saying that everyone holds biases and we have to create space in schools to be open in acknowledging and addressing it. If we can’t even talk about our biases, then we will never be able to address the impact. There needs to be ongoing dialogue in schools about race and racism in order to address the inequities in discipline, academics and more.

***“This sounds like it will cost a lot of money, and I don’t think we have funds for that.”***

Many schools already have professional development time every Monday, and funds to use on that time; it’s just a question of how they spend that time and money. Principals can also get staff to read about CRE or attend institutes offered by NYU and other organizations. If a school pays to send a few staff, they can come back and train others.

***“Teachers are already so overburdened with work; they can’t fit this in.”***

CRE is not something additional to add to the plate of already overwhelmed teachers; it is the plate. It is and should be the foundation of everything teachers do. If teachers connect with students, it’s actually easier to help them succeed academically. Research shows the most effective way to address equity gaps in student achievement is a high-quality teacher/student relationship. In fact, many teachers are asking for this type of training.

***“Schools have to teach the Common Core; we can’t just teach whatever we want.”***

The Common Core mandates skills that must be taught, but doesn’t mandate curriculum; so you can use many different types of texts, books, authors or videos as long as students learn the specific skills.

***“I don’t think that our school and teachers are ready for this. We are already working on so many things that I want them to do that really well. Now is just not the time.”***

Given the current political context, now is the essential time to do this. If not now, then when? If not us, then who? CRE is a lever that can enhance all of a school’s initiatives- academic, behavioral and social-emotional. Our kids are entitled to it.



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