

Culturally Relevant Responsive Teaching in the Choral Classroom

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Culturally relevant teaching is necessary because of “discontinuity between what students experience at home and what they experience at school in the speech and language interactions of teachers and students” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p. 159)

Defining Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)/Teaching

- The antithesis of a “color blind” approach to teaching: an approach to teaching that takes students’ cultures into consideration
- Students understand that their lived experiences are vital in the classroom
- “As a constructivist practice, learning, therefore, becomes an emancipatory process that frees students from the notion that a particular kind of cultural capital is worth having; difference does not equal deficit” (Bond, 2017, p. 155).

What has been written about CRP?

- Gloria Ladson-Billings and Geneva Gay are the “go-to” authors on this topic in general education (see bibliography)
- What has been written about CRP for music teachers?
 - Carlos Abril, 2006 – repertoire selection
 - Adria Hoffman, 2012 – chronicles a CRP music curriculum in a middle school
 - Julia Shaw (2012 *MEJ* article, 2014 dissertation) – CRP in choral settings
 - Vanessa Bond (2014 *CJ* article; literature review)

Main Ideas (Ladson-Billings, 1995)

- Three Propositions
 - “Students must experience academic success;
 - Students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and
 - Students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order.” (p. 160)
- **Culturally relevant teachers utilize students’ culture as a vehicle for learning.**
- “Repeatedly, culturally relevant teachers speak in terms of long-term academic goals for students. They rarely focus on ‘What should I do Monday?’ and spend a considerable amount of their planning trying to figure out what the semester or yearlong goals are” (p. 39).
 - **Social justice aims can/should be made part of the curriculum!**

“The Skin That We Sing” (Shaw, 2012)

Choral teachers can be more culturally responsive by:

- “selecting culturally valid repertoire that responds to students’ needs,
- adopting a balanced approach to teaching notation,
- promoting singing with a variety of vocal timbres and techniques,
- developing students’ socio-political competence, and
- designing curriculum around musical experiences that lead students to thoughtfully value music representative of diverse cultures” (p. 80).