Enhancing Cultural Proficiency
Student Services:
Culturally Proficient Approaches

- Introductions

- Logistics

- Setting the context

Other Cultures

The world in which you were born
 is just one model of reality.

Other cultures are not
failed attempts at being you:

They are unique manifestations
of the human spirit.

(Wade Davis, Anthropologist)

3

Barriers to Implementation

- Barriers
  - As we begin today's work, it will be useful to think about and articulate what we may identify as fears or obstacles as they relate to advancing cultural proficiency.
  - Using the diagram provided, indicate one barrier in each category.
  - We will collect, on sticky notes, the barriers that fall into the category of board or department. The themes, if any, that emerge will be highlighted later today.

Anticipated Outcomes

- Enhance your knowledge of the interconnectedness between department policies (Racial Equity and Special Education policies) and board policies (Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding and Human Rights and Special Education policies)

- Present some of the strategies and practices embodied in cultural proficiency that can be utilized to support our understanding of students and inform the "backward design" model

- Provide practice opportunities for self-assessment and the analysis of current practices and approaches to engaging students and meeting the needs of all learners

Share your Perceptions:
How do you think your partner would respond?

- country of family origin and heritage

- languages spoken

- interests or hobbies

- favorite foods

- preferred types of movies, TV programs

- preferred types of music

- pets, if any, or favorite animals

Cultural Proficiency Self-Assessment

- Purpose
  - To provide a baseline of information and a starting point for conversation about becoming culturally proficient

- Instructions (This is a timed activity)
  - As an individual, complete all five sections regarding the Elements of Cultural Proficiency.
  - Identify under each element, two statements that you feel most comfortable with, and two statements you would like to work on to increase your comfort level.
  - As a table group, identify two statements, from those identified as needing work to increase your comfort level to be able to apply it to your work. These will be shared with the full group.

Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency

1. **Assess Culture**
2. **Value Diversity**
3. **Manage the Dynamics of Difference**
4. **Adapt to Diversity**
5. **Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge**

The essential elements of cultural proficiency provide the standards for individual behaviour and organizational practices.

1. Assess Culture–Name the Differences

- aware of own culture

- aware of the effect of culture on other people

- learns about the culture of the organization and clients

2. Value Diversity–Claim the Differences

- welcomes a diverse group of clients
- shares this appreciation with others

3. Manage the Dynamics of Differences–Reframe the Difference

- recognizes that conflict is normal and part of life

- develops skills to manage conflict in a positive way

- clashes in personalities may in fact be conflicts in culture

4. Adapt to Diversity–Train about Differences

- commits to continuous learning

- enhances the substance and structure of work so that all are informed by the guiding principles of cultural proficiency

5. Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge–Change for Differences

- works to influence the culture of the organization so that its policies and practices are informed by the guiding principles of cultural proficiency

- creates opportunities for groups to progress

Cultural Proficiency

- is an "inside-out" approach and the theme for our session
  - Is about being aware of how we—as individuals and as organizations—work with others
  - Is about being aware of how we respond to those different from us
  - Is about visible and not so visible differences
  - Is about preparing to live in a world of differences
- is a world view, a mindset; it is the manner in which we lead our lives
- cannot be mandated; it can be nurtured

Pre-conditions for Doing This Work

- School leaders have to do their own work first.

- Each leader has to think deeply about the guiding principles and essential elements.

- Cultural Proficiency is a journey with our colleagues, not done to them.

- We begin where people are, not necessarily where we would like them to be.

Student Services & Cultural Proficiency

- Functions and policy areas:
  - Identify three functions (delivery focus areas) of Student Services that relate to meeting the needs of students with special needs
    - Step one–individual self-reflection process, non-communication
    - Step two–table sharing
    - Step three–large-group sharing

Student Services & Cultural Proficiency

- Functions and service delivery:
  - Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency
    - Assess Culture
    - Value Diversity
    - Manage the Dynamics of Difference
    - Adapt to Diversity
    - Institutionalize Cultural Knowledge

    Activity: Applying the Cultural Proficiency Lens

The Guiding Principles

The guiding principles are the core values, the foundation upon which the approach is built:

- Culture is a predominant force.
- People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture.
- Acknowledge group identities.
- Diversity within cultures is important.
- Respect unique cultural needs.

The Guiding Principles

- The best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all.

- The family, as defined by the culture, is the primary system of support in the education of children.

- School systems must recognize that marginalized groups have to be at least bicultural: "Community-centric" vs "School-centric"

- Schools must recognize and adjust to effects of historical oppression—over representation in special education and under representation in gifted programs.

Reflection and Dialogue

- Reflection and dialogue are fundamental to probing and understanding organizations' policies and practices.

- Reflection and dialogue are essential processes for individuals and organizations engaged in a journey toward cultural proficiency.
  - Reflection is the discussion we have with ourselves to understand our values and behaviours.
  - Dialogue is the discussion we have with others to understand their values and behaviours.

Questions to Guide Our Work

- What barriers to student learning exist within our schools and us?

- What are your core personal values that support equitable learning outcomes for students?

- What are your school's core values that support equitable learning outcomes for students?

- What examples do you have for unhealthy and healthy language, behaviours, policies, and practices used by your colleagues, your school, and you?

- What standards do you and your school use to ensure equitable learning outcomes for students?

Cultural Proficiency Tools

- **The Barriers**
  - caveats that assist in responding effectively to resistance to change

- **The Guiding Principles**
  - underlying values of the approach

- **The Continuum**
  - language for describing both healthy and non-productive policies, practices, and individual behaviours

- **The Essential Elements**
  - five behavioural standards for measuring, and planning for, growth toward cultural proficiency

List five things about you that, if taken from you, you would not be the same person you are today.

The Continuum

There are six points along the cultural proficiency continuum that indicate unique ways of perceiving and responding to differences.

- **cultural destructiveness**
- **cultural incapacity**
- **cultural blindness**
- **cultural pre-competence**
- **cultural competence**
- **cultural proficiency**

Cultural Destructiveness:
See the difference, stomp it out.

- any policy, practice, or behaviour that effectively eliminates another people's culture
  - e.g., discrimination against observable manifestations of ethnicity such as accent, hair, and adornments

Cultural Incapacity:
See the difference, make it wrong.

- the belief in the superiority of one's own culture and behaviour that disempowers another culture

- can lead to learned helplessness—people's belief that they are powerless because of repeated negative messages

  - e.g., questioning the qualifications of people of colour

Cultural blindness:
See the difference, act like you don't.

- any policy, practice, or behaviour that ignores existing cultural differences or considers such differences as inconsequential

- view cultural differences to be indications of disobedience, noncompliance, or other deficiencies
  - e.g., using the behaviour of a "model minority" as the criterion for judging all minority groups

Cultural Pre-competence:
See the difference, respond inadequately.

- reflected in people and organizations that are trying to use appropriate behaviours and practices

- engage proactively with cultures other than their own
  - e.g., recruit people who are not part of the mainstream culture and not provide them with any support or make any adaptations to their differences

Cultural Competence :
## See the difference, understand the difference that difference makes.

- awareness of the limitations of one's skills and/or an organization's practices

- incorporate appropriate behaviour in performance appraisals, advocate for changes in policies, practices, and behaviours

  - e.g., performance standards for culturally appropriate behaviour

Cultural Proficiency:
See the difference and respond positively and affirmingly.

- a way of being; an open and inclusive learning organization that also has a strong core culture that is clearly articulated by all
  - e.g., policies and practices (organization) and values and beliefs (individual)

Downward Spiral Conversation

Incapacity

Pre-Competence

Proficiency

Destructiveness   **Blindness**   **Competence**

Upward Spiral Conversation
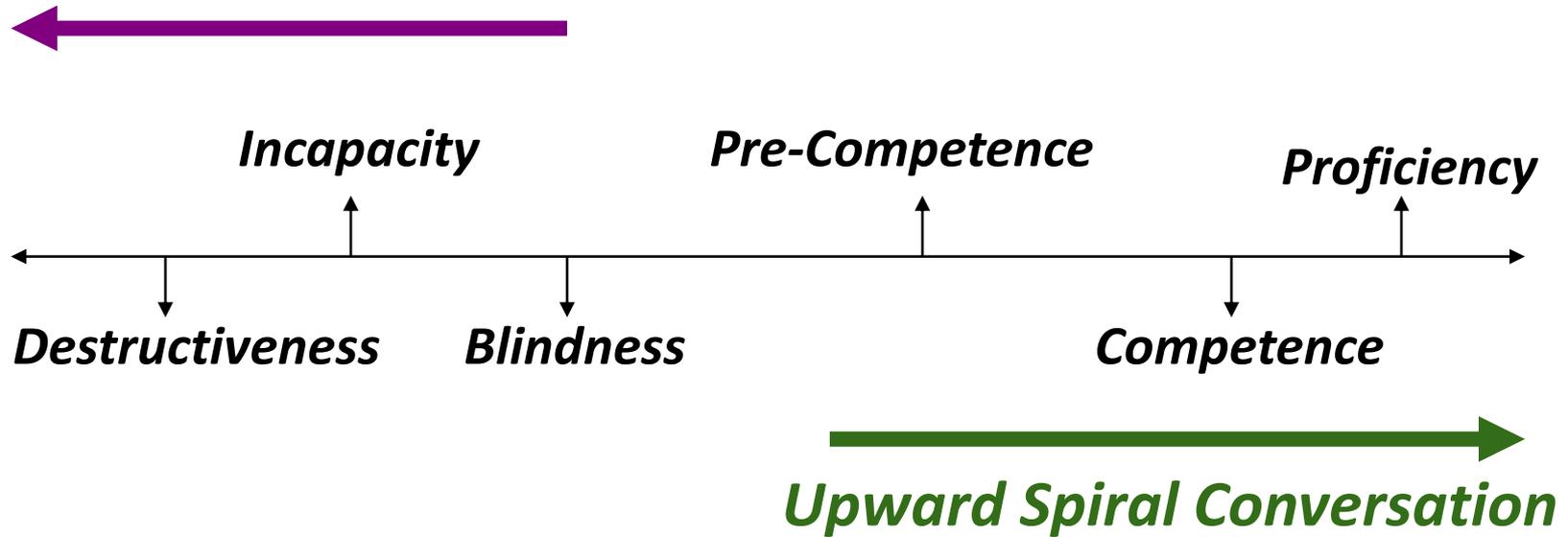
Cultural Proficiency helps us to move

FROM TOLERANCE FOR DIVERSITY
Destructiveness - Blindness

TO TRANSFORMATION FOR EQUITY
Precompetence - Proficiency

- focus on "them" and their inadequacies
- tolerate, assimilate, acculturate
- demographics viewed as challenge
- prevent, mitigate, avoid cultural dissonance and conflict
- stakeholders expect or help others to assimilate
- information added to existing policies, procedures, practices

- the focus on "us" and our practices
- esteem, respect, adapt
- demographics inform policy and practice
- manage, leverage, facilitate conflict
- stakeholders adapt to meet needs of others
- information integrated into policies, procedures, practices

32

Scenarios Activity

- Cultural proficiency provides a process for self-reflection, organizational analysis, and problem solving.
  - Your table group has been provided with a scenario to work through using the elements of cultural proficiency or the cultural proficiency continuum. Develop a response to share with the full group.
  - As you work to resolve the scenario, be sure to consider the specific context/situation in which the situation thrives.

"In-Basket" Activity

- Cultural proficiency provides a process for self-reflection, organizational analysis, and problem solving.

  – In your table groups, brainstorm a problem you agree upon as a group to work through using the elements of cultural proficiency or the cultural proficiency continuum. Develop a response to share with the full group.

  – As you work through the problem, be sure to consider the specific context/situation in which the problem thrives

34

Where to from here?

- What are the themes emerging from the "Perceived Barriers" activity?
  - What can you apply from today's experiences to address any of the identified barriers?
- What are some actions that can be accomplished on Monday? In four Mondays from here? And so on.

Cultural Proficiency Resources (ALR)

- ***Culturally Proficient Instruction: A Guide for People Who Teach*** (2006) Second Edition, by Kikanza Nuri Robins, Randall B. Lindsey, Delores B. Lindsey, and Raymond D. Terrell

- ***Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders*** (2003) Second Edition, by Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins, and Raymond D. Terrell

Voices that Resonate