

THE JOURNEY IS CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

Can you take the lead?

Are you the one to lead your school's journey toward cultural proficiency? Use this assessment tool to find out if you have the necessary knowledge, skills, and conviction. If you do, it may be time to step up to leadership. If not, this tool suggests upgrading your skills and attitudes and ways to find someone who is ready right now.



You have KNOWLEDGE of:

• Culture-specific information.	Yes	No
• Dimensions of culture.	Yes	No
• Culture in practice, policies, and procedures.	Yes	No
• Common culture clashes in school (e.g. instruction, behavior management, parent involvement).	Yes	No
• Educator beliefs that act as barriers to teaching and learning.	Yes	No
• Alternate explanations.	Yes	No
• Mindfulness.	Yes	No
• Culturally responsive curriculum, instruction, and leadership.	Yes	No

You have the SKILLS to:

• Facilitate groups (e.g. develop group norms, mediate conflict).	Yes	No
• Develop learning communities.	Yes	No
• Build a safe environment where teachers will feel free to talk.	Yes	No
• Recognize deficit thinking/beliefs.	Yes	No
• Challenge without humiliation and deconstruct and reframe deficit beliefs.	Yes	No
• Know who and when to challenge and when to withdraw.	Yes	No
• Remain emotionally neutral in the midst of conflict.	Yes	No

• Avoid getting hooked when others challenge you (e.g. if you're white, teachers accuse you of being a racist. Or, if you're a person of color, you're told "it's your issue"); don't take remarks/messages personally. This skill is especially difficult to practice if you identify with the group being labeled as deficit (e.g. person of color and/or grew up in poverty).	Yes	No
• Identify and resolve culture clashes.	Yes	No
• Work with a partner to plan and train.	Yes	No
• Admit you make mistakes.	Yes	No
• Culture switch.	Yes	No

You have CONVICTION that:

• Each child can learn and succeed.	Yes	No
• Learning should be student-centered.	Yes	No
• Schooling should be driven by what is best for students, families, and communities.	Yes	No
• Educators are well-intentioned, caring individuals.	Yes	No
• There is no one "right" way to do things.	Yes	No
• School reform requires change in both beliefs and practice.	Yes	No
• Culturally responsive teaching benefits all students and educators.	Yes	No
• Multicultural understanding is important for all students, not just diverse students.	Yes	No
• You can persevere — you will stick with the process even when it gets difficult	Yes	No

The results:

- If you answered "yes" to all of the questions listed in this tool, then you are the one to lead this journey.
- If you answered "yes" to all of the questions under the Conviction category but were not able to answer "yes" to most of the others under the categories of Knowledge and Skills, then get more diversity training before volunteering to lead this journey.
- If you answered "no" to most of the questions on this assessment tool, especially those in the Conviction category, then look for someone in your organization who can best help your staff develop cultural proficiency. Even if you are willing and capable of leading the effort, other commitments may prevent you from giving your attention to it, in which case you must identify someone who can.

For more information
See Sarah W. Nelson and Patricia L. Guerra's column, Cultural Proficiency, on p. 59.

If not me, who?

Canvass your district to find someone who has the knowledge, skills, and conviction to lead this effort. If there is no one, you can take one of three actions:

1. Hire professional diversity trainers;
2. Identify a staff member who is willing to take on the role and then develop this individual's knowledge and skills; or
3. Implement a two-tiered staff development program that splits responsibility between trainers. The two-tiered approach starts with a depersonalized exploration of the issues to develop a readiness and desire to learn more about diversity, followed by intensive training to delve deeper into personal beliefs and professional practice. The first step can be led by you or another staff member who has some cultural awareness and knowledge and is willing to lead teachers in a discussion.

Source: Guerra, P.L. & Nelson, S.W. (2006, April). *Leadership for diverse schools: Putting tough issues on the table*. Session presented at the annual meeting of the ASCD, Chicago, IL. ■