

An Actionable Guide for Diversity Equity & Inclusion in Schools

Researched by

Portia Morrell

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Power	5
Transparency	7
The Shift	10
Frameworks & Systems	12
Appendix	22

Introduction

“This past, this endless struggle to achieve and reveal and confirm a human identity, human authority, yet contains, for all its horror, something very beautiful.

I do not mean to be sentimental about suffering – enough is certainly as good as a feast – but people who cannot suffer can never grow up, can never discover who they are. That man who is forced each day to snatch his manhood, his identity, out of the fire of human cruelty that rages to destroy it knows, if he survives his effort, and even if he does not survive it, something about himself and human life that no school on earth – and indeed, no church – can teach. He achieves his own authority, and that is unshakable.

This is because, in order to save his life, he is forced to look beneath appearances, to take nothing for granted, to hear the meaning behind the words. If one is continually surviving the worse that life can bring, one eventually ceases to be controlled by a fear of what life can bring; whatever it brings must be borne. And at this level of experience one’s bitterness begins to be palatable, and hatred becomes too heavy a sack to carry.”

— James Baldwin

In a perfect world, a research paper like this one would be unnecessary to write because people’s differences would not be used as a tool to create oppression and supremacy. Since this is not yet the case, I think that it is important to lay the groundwork for how DEI should be approached. A relevant quote from Anais Nin says, “We don’t see things how they are... we see things as we are.” We must step out and look in, as well as understand through history, how we got here in the first place.

My process for writing this paper began by watching many documentaries about the history of race, including laws passed in the United States that discriminated against various marginalized groups to reflect, followed by researching how our school currently addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion. The main goal of this paper is to look and reflect on the reality of where we are as an institution, create a blueprint for the bridge we need to build as a school community, and lay out an actionable framework for how we get there.

As you read this paper, I request that you are open to new perspectives, viewpoints, and research. That you read with an open heart, filled with empathy and compassion for people, and that you accept this is an imperfect journey that requires a real leap of courage, vulnerability, and transparency. Lastly, I leave you with an anonymous quote, “I won’t apologize for evolving past your comfort zone.” I hope we as a school community can do the same.

A Case for Change

For this paper to be successful in its efforts, it is important to start with a common language of terminology and to explicitly lay out why we need to change as an institution, interpersonally and personally. According to an article titled, Levels of Racism: A Theoretic Framework and a Gardener’s Tale by Dr. Camara Phyllis Jones, she states:

The variable race is only a rough proxy for socioeconomic status, culture, and genes, but it precisely captures the social classification of people in a race-conscious society such as the United States. The race noted on a health form is the same race noted by a sales clerk, a police officer, or a judge, and this racial classification has a profound impact on daily life experience in this country. That is, the variable “race” is not a biological construct that reflects innate differences, but a social construct that precisely captures the impacts of racism. For this reason, some investigators now hypothesize that race-associated differences in health outcomes are in fact due to the effects of racism. (Jones 1212)

An abridged version of the four levels of racism (see appendix for full details)

- Internalized racism lies within individuals
- Interpersonal racism occurs between individuals
- Institutional racism occurs within institutions and systems of power
- Structural racism is racial bias among institutions and across society

A Gardener's Tale

Let's imagine a gardener who has two flower boxes, one that she knows to be filled with rich, fertile soil and another that she knows to be filled with poor, rocky soil. This gardener has two packets of seeds for the same type of flower. However, the plants grown from one packet of seeds will bear pink blossoms, while the plants grown from the other packet of seeds will bear red blossoms. The gardener prefers red over pink, so she plants the red seed in the rich fertile soil and the pink seed in the poor rocky soil. And sure enough, what I witnessed in my own garden comes to pass in this garden too. All of the red flowers grow up and flourish, with the fittest growing tall and strong and even the weakest making it to a middling height. But in the box with the poor rocky soil, things look different. The weak among the pink seeds don't even make it, and the strongest among them grow only to a middling height. In time the flowers in these two boxes go to seed, dropping their progeny into the same soil in which they were growing. The next year the same thing happens, with the red flowers in the rich soil growing full and vigorous and strong, while the pink flowers in the poor soil struggle to survive. And these flowers go to seed. Year after year, the same thing happens. Ten years later the gardener comes to survey her garden. Gazing at the two boxes, she says, "I was right to prefer red over pink! Look how vibrant

and beautiful the red flowers look, and see how pitiful and scrawny the pink ones are.” (Jones 1212)

With the understanding of the four levels of racism combined with the story of the gardener, you can affiliate the growth and success of the flowers and their environment to internalized, interpersonal and institutionalized racism. The gardener would be considered structural racism. How can we get the gardener to own the whole garden and not be satisfied when only the red flowers thrive? If the gardener will not invest in the whole garden, how can the pink flowers recruit or grow their own gardener? (Jones 1214)

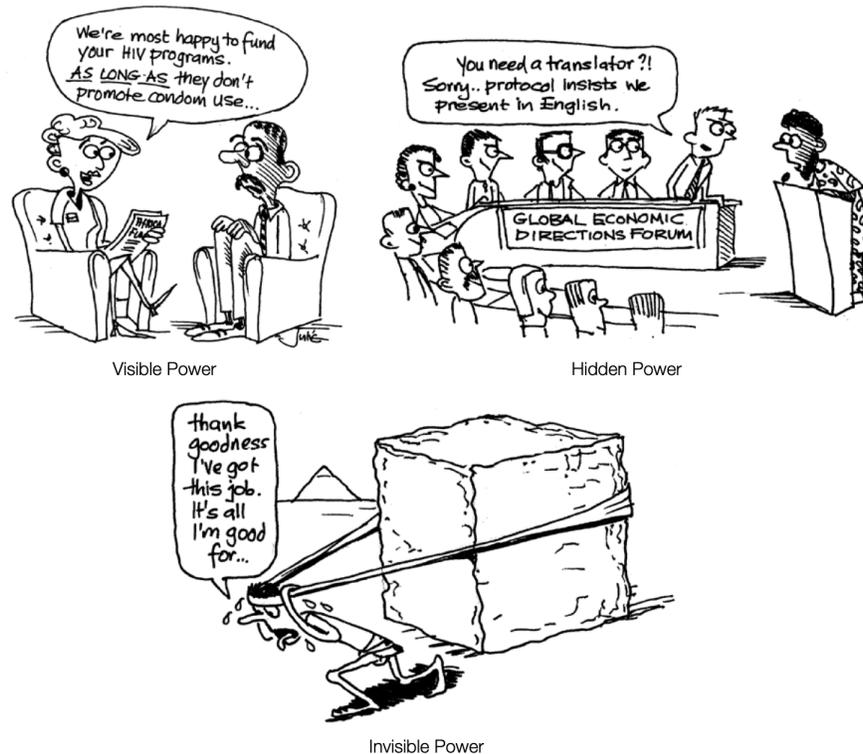
Power

In simple terms, power is defined as the ability to do something or influence the behavior of others or the course of events. It is important to talk about power because of its correlation and direct impact on institutional change. Specifically, I would like to focus on the faces and spaces of power.

Forms of Power

According to *A Practical Guide for Facilitating Social Change*, there are three forms of power: visible, hidden, and invisible. **Visible power** includes political power that we visually see encompassed as formal rules, structures, institutions, and procedures informing decision making. It is about how those people with power use existing procedures and structures to control the actions of others. **Hidden power** is exercised when powerful people and institutions maintain their influence by setting and manipulating agendas and marginalizing the concerns and voices of less powerful groups. Those with power see and understand these rules of the game; others don't. **Invisible power** operates in ways in which people will adopt belief systems that are created by

those with power. Problems and issues are kept away not only from the decision-making table but also from the minds and hearts of different people including those affected by these decisions. This is when powerlessness is internalized. (Hunjan and Pettit 12)



Spaces of Power

Spaces of power can be understood as the places where opportunities for formal and informal interaction help people shape the decisions and rules that affect their lives and others. These spaces can be closed, invited, created/claimed. **Closed spaces** are when decisions are made behind closed doors, often without providing opportunities for inclusion. This can also include formal spaces open only to official positions, for example, the executive members and the board. **Invited spaces** are spaces that require an authoritative figure to invite people to participate in the decision-making process as members of the community. Although these spaces could become opportunities for genuine collaboration, agendas are often pre-determined.

Created/claimed spaces are created when less powerful people come together to create their own space, and set their own agendas. Examples of created/claimed spaces are grassroots initiatives, community-created, and social movements.

Understanding the faces of power and the spaces of power is important because only a few forms of power are visibly displayed in our institution. However, hidden and invisible power lives in school, and if we reflect on spaces of power; which spaces are closed, invited, and created? To directly connect power to institutional racism, the writers of *Cultural Proficiency* (Henz, Katz, Norte, Sather, and Walker 2002) provides a shorthand formula:

$$\text{racism} = \text{racial prejudice} + \text{institutional power}$$

It is possible for people of color as individuals to display acts of prejudice towards other individuals. But people of color, individually or collectively, do not have the social, political, or economic power in the United States to alter the collective racial experience of White people (Singleton 53).

Transparency

The principle of transparency in organizing, engagement, and equity work refers to the full and honest accounting of all facts, information, and context essential to ensuring an informed and equitable decision-making process. In practice, the principle of transparency also applies to the intentions and conduct of leaders, organizers, and facilitators, including whether they encourage or suppress criticism and dissenting viewpoints, whether they share or conceal unflattering information and conflicts of interest, and whether they acknowledge or disregard their own motivations and biases (Holley and Martinez).

Transparency is key in building a better community at our school, especially given the power dynamics I've noticed at our school. I found this article that talks about transparency

strategies, which I believe could help to bridge the gap and build a more concrete sense of community. In the biography, you can read more in detail about how to accomplish each strategy.

Transparency Strategies (Holley and Martinez)

1. Acknowledging history and past injustice
2. Recognizing cultural differences and biases
3. Acknowledging mistakes and taking responsibility
4. Allowing all perspectives to be heard
5. Explaining the process and establishing clear expectations
6. Providing full and open access to essential information
7. Communicating quickly, proactively, and thoroughly
8. Disclosing funding sources and conflicts of interest

Major takeaways from this detailed article, in which all administrators with power should read:

- Past injustices—whether it's experiences with broken promises, institutional mistreatment, racial discrimination, economic exploitation, or political corruption—can shape a community's perception of current problems and challenges, and they can also diminish the hopefulness and optimism that motivate people to become involved in a problem-solving process.
- Modeling transparent and respectful discussions of cross-cultural differences and bias can help community members become more comfortable, confident, and culturally self-aware in diverse groups, which can help to reduce harmful assumptions, negative interactions, social tensions, and other factors that undermine an inclusive dialogue or process.

- In organizing, engagement, and equity work, leaders can build—or rebuild—trust and credibility by openly acknowledging past mistakes and any harm that might have been caused in the community.
- When public institutions avoid admissions of fault or fail to take appropriate responsibility, community leaders working outside of those institutions can organize students, families, and other stakeholders to push for greater accountability and transparency.
- One of the most effective transparency strategies is building diversity of voice and representation into a system, campaign, or process by making it a standard or required practice. For example, leaders, organizers, and facilitators can ensure that all leadership teams and committees include representatives from relevant stakeholder groups, or that important activities and decision-making processes are collaboratively planned and facilitated with diverse stakeholder involvement.
- Transparent approaches to facilitation are especially important when participants lack power, authority, or control in a given situation; when they might have been ignored, demeaned, or humiliated by authority figures in the past; or when they've had no previous experience with a particular process. When power dynamics are unequal and left unaddressed, participants may be hesitant to disagree with authority figures, question the goals or intentions of a process, or challenge dominant viewpoints or narratives.
- Transparency also requires leaders, organizers, and facilitators to not withhold or suppress important information, even if it's embarrassing to an individual or organization. Any presentation of information will not be genuinely transparent if it obscures, misleads, or manipulates community members. Because the natural human impulse to omit,

conceal, or censor potentially embarrassing information is strong, leaders, organizers, and facilitators should consider adopting standard policies, procedures, and practices—before they are needed to address a specific situation—that establish clear transparency guidelines for organizations, campaigns, and groups. For example, districts could adopt transparency policies and guidelines that would not allow school administrators to censor student newspapers for factual and accurate reporting or shut down a student-organized protest simply because these activities could potentially be embarrassing to the administration.

- Another essential element of transparency is keeping the community informed about the progress and outcomes of a process or initiative, especially when community members have been involved. For example, schools routinely survey staff, students, and families, and yet they often neglect to share the resulting survey data and findings with either respondents or the larger community. Similarly, districts may ask community members to participate in a strategic planning process, but then fail to keep them informed about the district's progress on implementing the final plan. If community members are asked for their viewpoints, time, or other contributions, leaders should keep them involved and informed as the process unfolds.

The Shift

As we make changes to our institution, I've researched frameworks and systems and noticed a trend that I think can also be helpful, which is to reflect on where we currently stand TO where we are trying to go, or what it should look like. Oftentimes called the shift. Here are three samples of shifting that we can adapt, modify, and be inspired by.

From the BELE framework:

Shift FROM	Shift TO
Generic vision statements and goals that do not reflect unique and diverse school communities and do not name an explicit commitment to addressing inequitable experiences and outcomes that exist	<p>▶▶ Center Equity & Justice: A shared and articulated vision for and commitment to equity, diversity and belonging.</p> <p>- Identification of universal goals and targeted strategies based on how communities are situated relative to opportunity</p>
Engaging, designing and decision-making that does not acknowledge the historical and social-political context of school. Understanding and talking about racialized experiences and inequitable outcomes as isolated and decontextualized events	<p>▶▶ Collective Wellbeing: Lead from an awareness of the history and harms of racism and structural inequity and from a belief that our fates are linked</p>
Advantaging and accepting as the norm, white dominant culture behaviors, and values	<p>▶▶ Decenter Whiteness: Respect, value, and see as assets individuals' and communities' multiple ways of knowing, doing and being</p>
Fear or distrust in the capacity of teachers, families and communities of color to generate critique, analysis and solutions to current inequities	<p>▶▶ Transform Power: Distribute leadership, center the voices and experiences of students, families and others closest to the work and consciously redistribute power across role groups and institutions</p>
Creating and implementing plans, policies, and strategies FOR school communities	<p>▶▶ Co-Design: Invite, engage and design solutions and co-produce knowledge in partnership with students, teachers, families, and communities</p>

From the PK-12 Vision for Advanced Literacy Summary

SHIFT 3 Increase access to culturally responsive resources

Department of Literacy Commitments	What We'll See in Schools
Identify curricular resource recommendations to support teachers in adopting key practices that lead to advanced literacy	Teachers are freed to focus on instructional practice and tailoring instruction to meet the needs of their students, rather than on designing curricula
Increase access to culturally responsive resources by partnering with vendors who share our values regarding culturally diverse and linguistically authentic collections	Easier to access, simpler to use, 'one click' ordering mechanisms to supplement curricula and classrooms with quality instructional resources
Prioritize curricular resources in the top five languages spoken by students in the district to increase student access to authentic, relevant texts and instruction	Classrooms celebrate linguistic diversity and promote biliteracy in ways that are authentic and meaningful to students and families
Engage teachers deeply in the development and piloting phases of the comprehensive curriculum to ensure quality, utility, and tailoring for CPS students	Instruction backed by the universal curriculum is aligned with advanced literacy practices and is effective at increasing equity in literacy outcomes
Direct internal and external resources towards under-resourced schools and communities	Increasing equity in access to resources and partnerships to support effective literacy learning

From the Rubric for Shared Leadership and School Governance

Opportunities	 BASIC This is a starting place: <u>Baseline expectation.</u>	 GROWING This is intentional and expanded planning/programming/resource allocation	 THRIVING This is high-level engagement, with integrated programming and some attention to sustainability
Building Community and Family Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> School has established a family partnerships team that designs and coordinates family engagement efforts at the school. School has a parent/family-led organization (such as a PTA or an independent parent group). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> School has an active family partnerships team of families, community partners and school staff that meets regularly, and informs decisions about how to engage families in the academic process. Parent/family groups are focused on equitable opportunities for all students, and consider priorities from the School Plan for Student Achievement when deciding goals & projects. School helps connect students and families to SFUSD and community-based training and leadership development programs. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> School has an active family partnerships team that reflects the diversity of the student population, and leads the school's family engagement strategies. Funds raised by the parent/family group to support the school are allocated based on priorities in the School Plan for Student Achievement. School helps connect student and family leaders with district-level advisory committees and opportunities.

All of the above shift models are great at visualizing how to publicize the start point, vision and ending points. Think about this as you read about the proposed frameworks and systems.

Frameworks & Systems

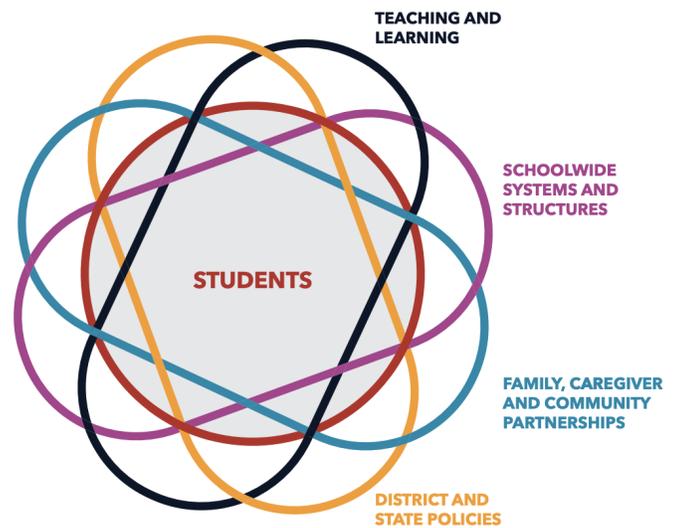
After much reading and evaluation of documentaries, I learned that the only way to create real change in our institutions is to have consistency. Just like teachers have standards and guidelines and frameworks, our full institution needs guidelines systems and frameworks. Here is a list of the best frameworks and systems when combined would be best for the school:

BELE Framework -- [Full Framework](#)

The Building Equitable Learning Environments (BELE) Framework is a guide for transforming student experiences and learning outcomes.

We can only be healthy and strong as a nation when every educational institution is a place where all children can learn, develop and thrive. The evidence and research are abundantly clear.

Both confirm two things we know as educators: 1) a young person's academic, social and emotional development are inextricably linked, and 2) the quality of a child's learning environment, their experiences, and access to opportunity determines their developmental and academic outcomes. Educators, system leaders, and communities committed to transforming education systems can use this guide to increase student engagement and agency, support adult development and practice, and ensure schools reliably produce equitable student experiences and outcomes.



The structure of the BELE framework is separated into four sections or lenses; Teaching and Learning, Schoolwide Systems and Structures, Family, Caregiver, and Community Partnerships, and District and Policies. All four lenses are centered around students.

Within each lens, there are set Commitments followed by complimentary Core Practices & Policies. This approach is effective because it is centered around the student and covers all roles, practices, and policies that impact the student. My recommendation is to keep the commitments but modify the core practices and policies to reflect our values. I've created a Google Sheet of the framework to [start with here](#).

Looking through this framework there is a software called [Copilot](#), which is a professional learning tool with a built-in survey engine. It helps educators systematically improve the quality and equity of their students' learning experiences.

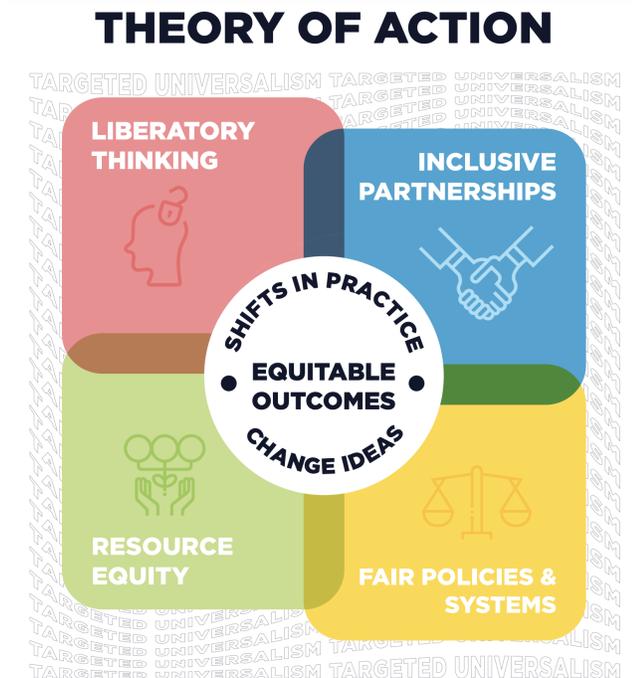
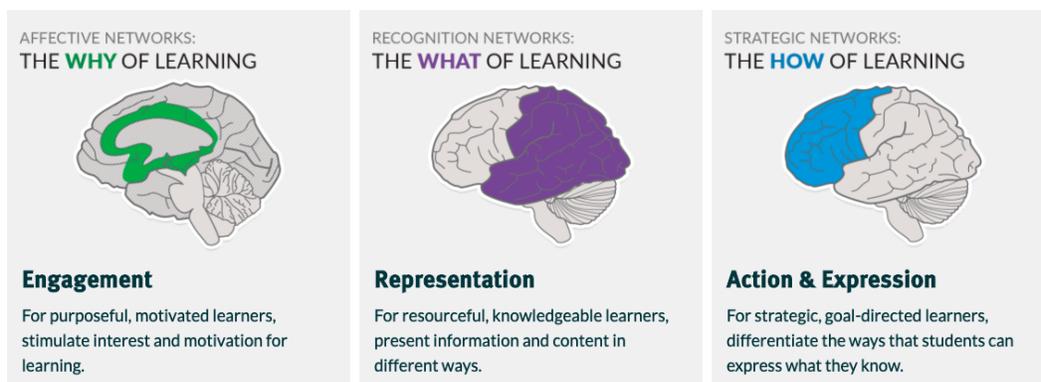
CPS Equity Framework -- [Full Framework](#)

The Chicago Public Schools Equity Framework is the result of ongoing, thoughtful partnerships with stakeholders committed to advancing educational equity for all students, including central and network office staff, principals, educators, parents, students, and community partners. To create the Equity Framework, the [Office of Equity](#) (which was also created by the Chicago Public Schools) also reviewed current research, frameworks, and practice on equity and inequity in schools, districts, and municipal governing bodies, and we collaborated with the Building Equitable Learning Environment (BELE) Network.

Not only is this a great resource of how to turn the BELE framework into actionable content, but there are also key strategies that would be useful to our school:

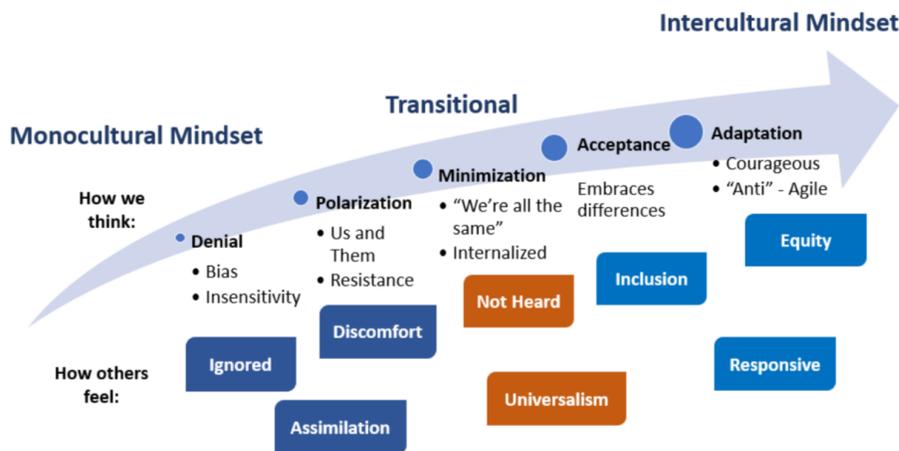
- [Liberatory Thinking](#) -- working toward a common vision for equity and racial justice
- [Spectrum of Inclusive Partnerships](#) -- guidelines for positive, consistent
- [Student Voice 360^o](#) -- Toolkit for Building Stronger Student-Adult Partnerships

UDL Guidelines -- [Full Guidelines](#)



The UDL Guidelines are a tool used in the implementation of Universal Design for Learning, a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning for all people based on scientific insights into how humans learn. The UDL Guidelines can be used by educators, curriculum developers, researchers, parents, and anyone else who wants to implement the UDL framework in a learning environment. These guidelines offer a set of concrete suggestions that can be applied to any discipline or domain to ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities. In my opinion, the UDL guidelines are a way for teachers to assess on a neurological basis if their lesson plans align with the standards for engagement, representation, and action & expression.

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity -- [Full Framework](#)



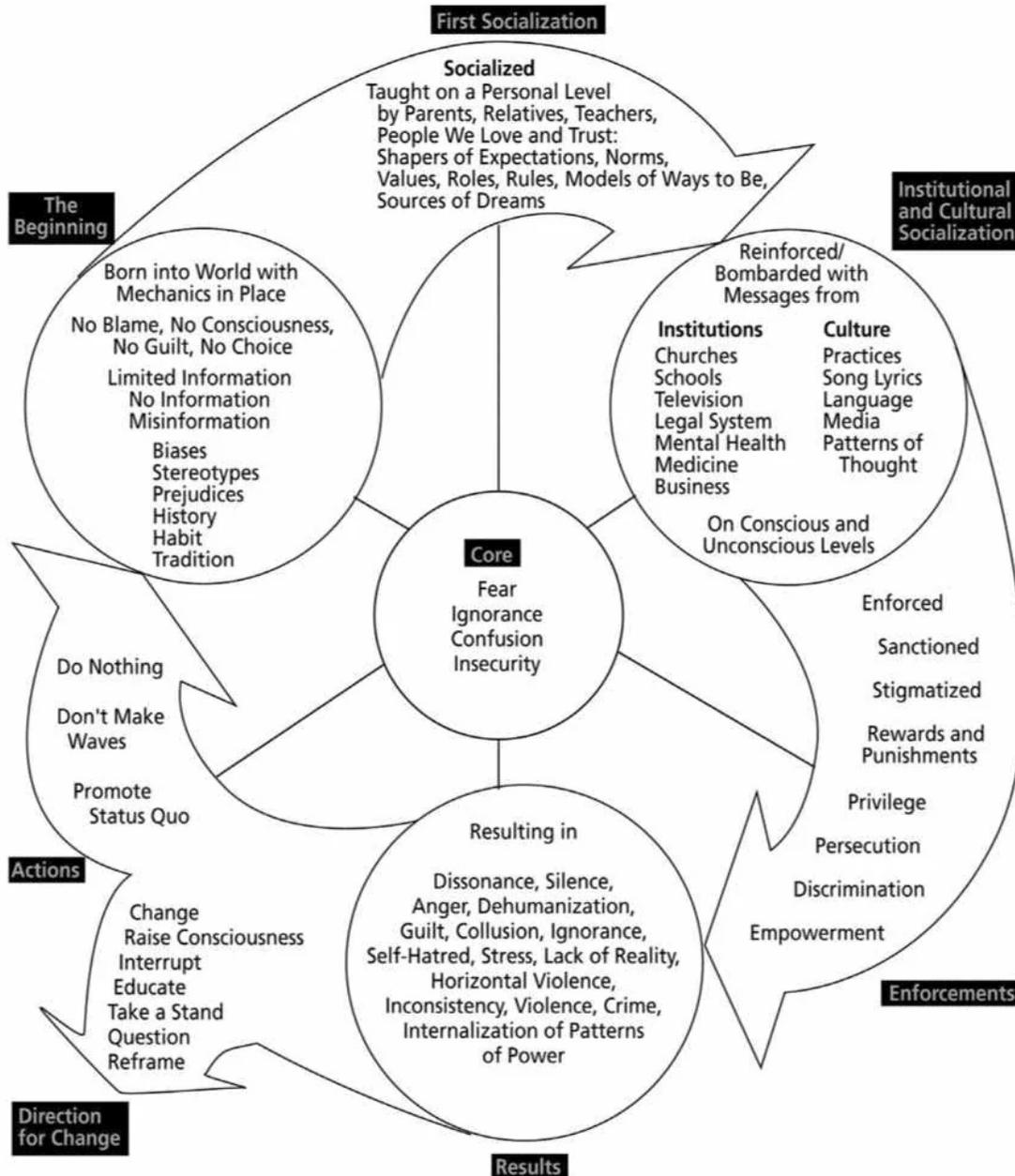
None of these approaches are negative or judgements. They are stages of development people will experience in different situations. This helps us have a common language and empathy to understand what's going on around us.

*Adapted from the work of Bennett and Hammer, Intercultural Sensitivity

Intercultural competency is really a mindset along the spectrum from the Monocultural Mindset to true intercultural competence. Along the way, there are various thought processes and feelings that you must overcome to achieve it.

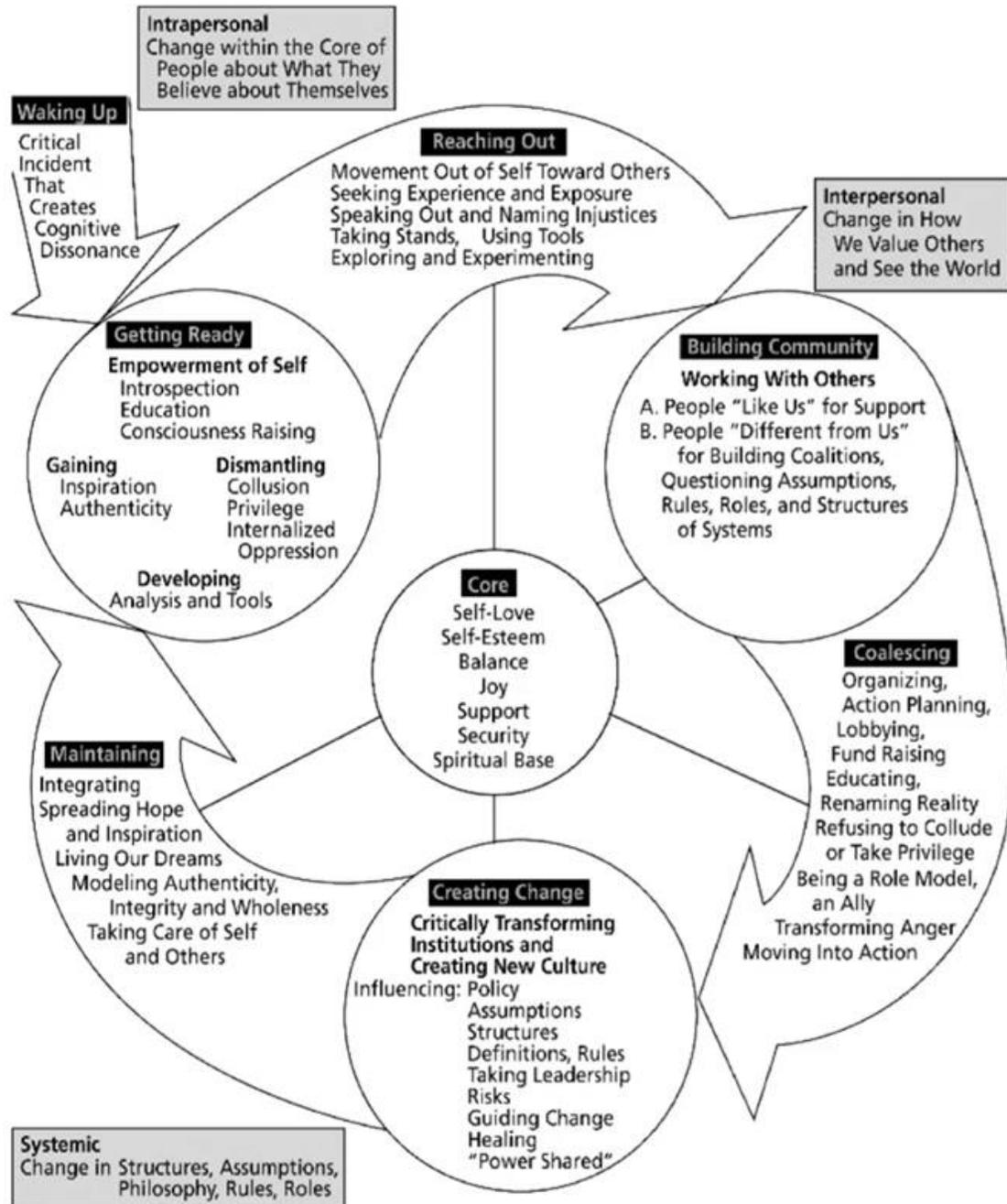
Here are two cycles that apply well to this model:

The Cycle of Socialization -- [Read more here](#)



Source: Cycle of Socialization developed by Bobbie Harro

Cycle of Liberation



Source: Developed by Bobbie Harro

Social Justice Standards -- [Full Standards](#)

The Social Justice Standards are a set of anchor standards and age-appropriate learning outcomes divided into four domains—Identity, Diversity, Justice, and Action (IDJA). The standards provide a common language and organizational structure: Teachers can use them to guide curriculum development, and administrators can use them to make schools more just, equitable, and safe. The standards are leveled for every stage of K–12 education and include school-based scenarios to show what anti-bias attitudes and behavior may look like in the classroom.



Though these standards are somewhat known to the school, when adapting this framework I would recommend adding a column for practices and policies. How will the school actively help implement and embody the Social Justice Standards and grade-level outcomes?

Cultural Competence Now (Mayfield 25)

Advice from Vernita Mayfield on how to establish cultural competence in schools:

1. Establish Vision and Set Goals
2. Create a caring community
3. Communicate your goals to stakeholders and help them understand the complexity of the work
4. Organize for ongoing learning
5. Rethink, reframe and redirect conflict
6. Empower for Leadership, Agency, and Activism

Though the above are just key points, the book provides a more detailed explanation of how to accomplish each goal that I would recommend you to read. I would also recommend this book for its partnered 56 exercises that help educators understand and challenge bias, racism, and privilege. These exercises require educators to partner up at the beginning of the year and complete various activities that start with identity reflecting on bias privilege and racism throughout the school year.

Putting it all together

It may seem like many frameworks and standards but when combined they fill the need for every role. I view the BELE framework as a way to view and standardize the entire institution, centered for the student surrounded by Teaching & Learning, Schoolwide Systems and Structures, Community Partnerships, and Policies. The CPS framework was built out of the BELE framework and is a real-world implementation and adaptation that we can dissect and use. Since we are a bilingual school, we lend well to intercultural and cultural competence and the UDL and Social Justice Standards can be applied to the teaching and learning spectrum.

Conclusion

I think that we can agree that we have to do better as a community. However, I do not believe that we are all on the same page. My recommendation for bridging the gap of understanding is to approach this in a systematic but authentic way. We have to be transparent, even when the data or reality may be ugly. There needs to be an awareness of how power is distributed on an Institutional level and who has this power. We need to be honest and fearless about this approach as well as student-centered always. Lastly, we all need to be accountable and

acknowledge that our influence as individuals and our interpersonal relationships affects the culture we create and maintain at the school. There is much to do at every level and at every role and I believe in order to accomplish this we need to set goals, standards, commitments, and frameworks that help align us all.

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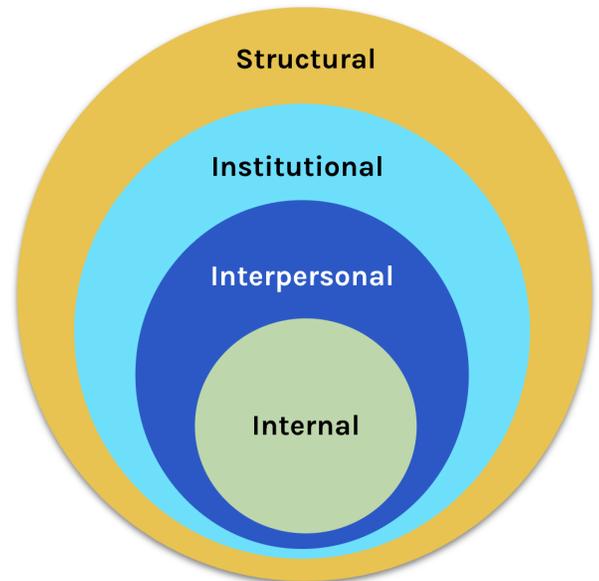
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Appendix

The Four Levels of Racism

With this premise in mind, she continued to write about three levels of racism paired with the analogy story of a gardener which can be compared to the fourth level of racism.



Internal

Internal racism is within one's self correlated to negative beliefs about one's abilities. Characterized by one not believing in others who look like them, and not believing in themselves. It involves accepting limitations to one's own full humanity, including one's spectrum of dreams, one's right to self-determination, and one's range of allowable self-expression. (Jones 1213)

Interpersonal

Interpersonal racism (personally mediated) occurs between individuals. This is the bias that occurs when individuals interact with others and their personal racial beliefs affect their public interactions. Where prejudice means differential assumptions about the abilities, motives, and intentions of others according to their race, and discrimination means differential actions toward others according to their race. Interpersonal racism can be intentional as well as unintentional, and it includes acts of commission as well as acts of omission. It

manifests as lack of respect (poor or no service, failure to communicate options), suspicion (shopkeepers' vigilance, everyday avoidance, including street crossing, purse clutching, and standing when there are empty seats on public transportation), devaluation (surprise at competence, stifling of aspirations), scapegoating, and dehumanization (police brutality, sterilization abuse, hate crimes). (Jones 1213)

Institutional

Institutional racism occurs within institutions and systems of power. This refers to the unfair policies and discriminatory practices of particular institutions (schools, workplaces, etc.) that routinely produce racially inequitable outcomes for people of color and advantages for white people. Individuals within institutions take on the power of the institution when they reinforce racial inequities. Concerning school, there is rarely intention discrimination between the teacher-student relationship; rather, discrimination includes unquestioned assumptions on the part of the institution. Unquestioned assumptions and unsubstantiated beliefs develop from limited experiences developed from limited experiences about attitudes and abilities of students of color and their families are the basis for detrimental instructional practices that foster and preserve racial inequities in schools (Singleton 53).

Structural

Structural racism is a racial bias among institutions and across society. This involves the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors, including the history, culture, ideology, and interactions of institutions and policies that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color. White people can develop skills to not see and acknowledge the impact of race and racial advantage, in their lives or the pervasiveness of institutionalized racism, which is called structured colorblindness (Singleton 117).

