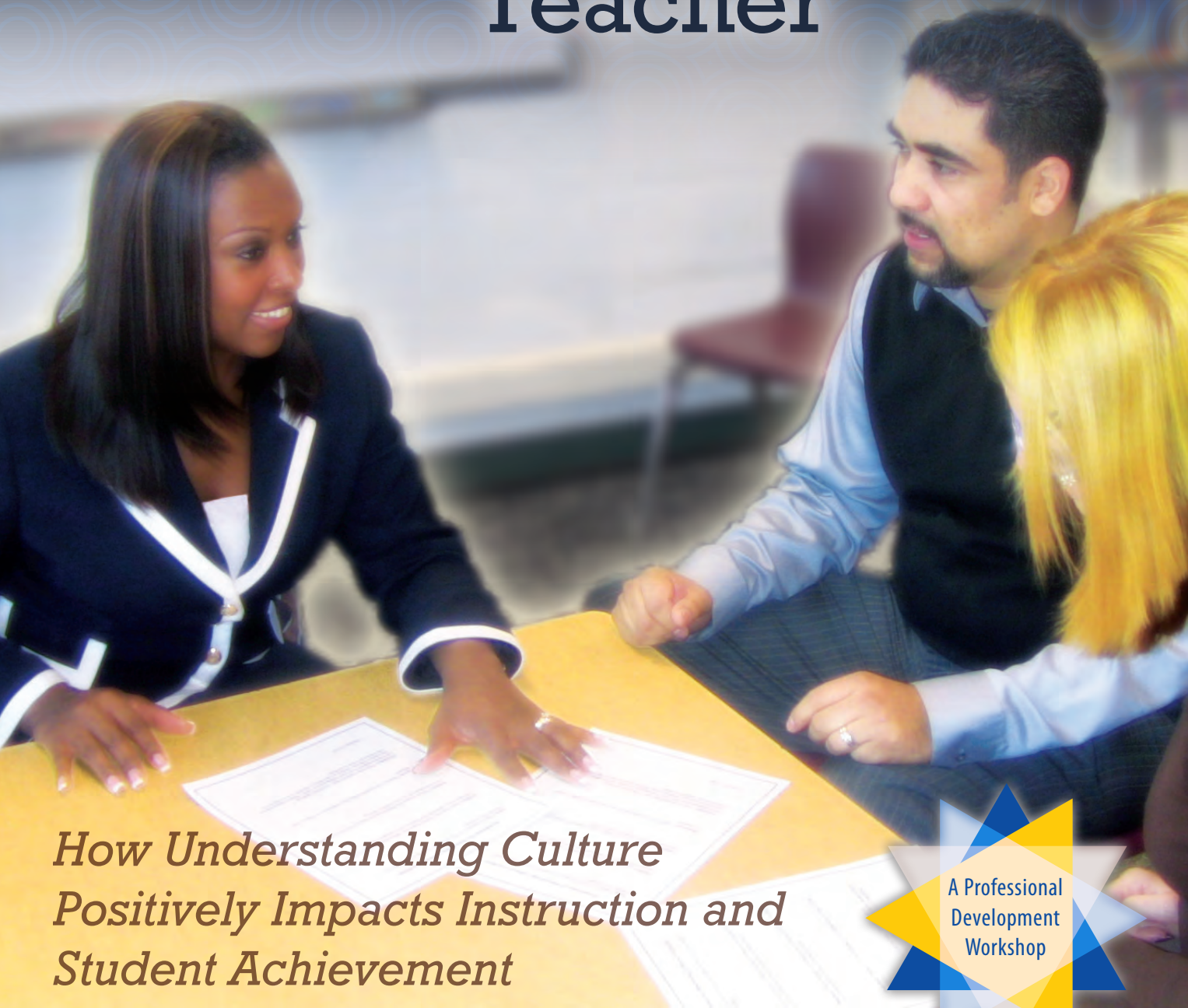




THE Culturally Responsive Teacher



*How Understanding Culture
Positively Impacts Instruction and
Student Achievement*



Sonya Whitaker

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THE Culturally Responsive Teacher

*How Understanding Culture
Positively Impacts Instruction
and Student Achievement*

Sonya Whitaker

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Sample Probing Questions for Facilitators

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Additional Resources to Read and Discuss

"Talking Race: Making a Space Where Teachers Can Talk About
Differences," by Jeneé Darden

"Relevant: Beyond the Basics," by Jacqueline Jordan Irvine



Welcome from Sonya

I am Dr. Sonya Whitaker and I have spent my entire career as a teacher, assistant principal, principal, central office administrator, educational consultant, and now superintendent. I am committed to assisting you in raising the achievement levels of all students, which includes children from diverse backgrounds and those growing up in poverty. It is with great pleasure that I share my learning with you so that you, too, can help teachers help *all students* be successful.

This DVD and the accompanying resources provide staff developers, principals, and teachers with the tools needed to successfully conduct and engage in a workshop—what I like to call a *professional development experience*. The workshop has been designed to help participants develop the practical skills they need to identify and address the cultural conflicts that arise in their classrooms and schools as these conflicts occur on a day-to-day basis.

Teachers who effectively address cultural conflicts on an ongoing basis report that students from all backgrounds become actively engaged and invested in the learning process. Their students share responsibility for their learning because they know that their cultural experiences are valued and the curricular experiences are relevant to their lives. When this occurs, high levels of learning for all become possible—and *all* students have the opportunity to reach their full academic potential.



OVERVIEW

What will participants get from this resource?

- ◉ A deeper understanding of one's self
- ◉ An appreciation for different perspectives and the surfacing of those perspectives
- ◉ A transformation of thinking, behaving, and being
- ◉ The opportunity to increase student achievement

What makes this different from traditional professional development?

This tool has been designed for teachers to engage in a professional experience, which means they will be actively engaged in the learning process. Many participants report that they have been “transformed” as a result of participating in this workshop. When teachers go back to their school or classrooms, they are committed to doing something different. They understand how to connect with their students in more effective ways and consequently are equipped to dramatically improve student achievement.

What is culture?

Culture is the air we breathe. It is who we are. It's all our childhood experiences and how those experiences impact our interactions with others—our peers and our students. It is not specific to gender, race, or ethnicity. It is about what makes us alike and what makes us different.

What is a cultural conflict?

A cultural conflict is a situation or issue that arises when two or more people develop a misunderstanding. Most conflicts are specifically related to our culture and the impact our culture has on how we interact with others. Cultural conflicts can be resolved if we make a commitment to think deeply about who we are, where we come from, and how our past experiences impact our interactions with others today. This professional development experience is designed to help teachers begin this process of understanding their own culture—and how cultural perspectives might impact student achievement. Cultural conflicts can be resolved if we make a commitment to understanding who we

are and how we interact with others. Thinking deeply about the following can aid us in this process:

- ⦿ What was our family life like as we grew up, and how might these experiences impact who we are today?
- ⦿ What were our experiences in school as a student?
- ⦿ How did our family traditions, holiday celebrations, or ethnic or cultural background shape who we are and how we view ourselves, others, and the world?
- ⦿ What were our experiences as a result of our family's financial situation or social class?

All of this impacts how we see ourselves, our students, and our peers.

What does it mean to be culturally competent?

Being culturally competent means possessing the commitment, the confidence, and the skills needed to courageously engage in deep conversations about cultural conflicts. Engaging in deep conversations is required to fully understand our own culture and the culture of our peers and our students. This understanding is vital to our awareness of how culture influences our decisions and behavior, as well as the decisions and behaviors of our peers and students. Being culturally competent means being able to stop, reflect, respect, respond, and consider when confronted with a cultural conflict.

How can cultural competency (or lack of it) impact student achievement?

If teachers are not aware of their own culture and are uncomfortable with where some of their students come from, or how they behave, it can impact their assessment of what students know and are able to do. Teacher assessment can have wide-ranging consequences for students, within the classroom and beyond. If assessment is inaccurate, teachers may unintentionally impede students' academic development instead of fostering it. When cultural conflicts occur and are avoided, rather than resolved, teachers miss opportunities to fully know and understand students both academically and as human beings. This also decreases the likelihood that all students will be successful.

What is culturally responsive teaching? And why is it important?

Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches *to* and *through* the strengths of these students. Culturally responsive teaching is about asking the deep questions, daily, such as:

- ⦿ How does my culture impact my assessment of what my students know and are able to do?

- ◉ Is it possible that because of my culture I am providing my students with assessments that actually hold them back or *don't* adequately show what they know and are able to do?
- ◉ Is it possible that some aspect of my students' cultures makes me so uncomfortable that I am unable to see their academic strengths?

A culturally responsive teacher looks closely at the decisions she or he makes in the classroom and tries to understand how those decisions and behaviors are perceived, received, and acted upon by students (Gay 2000).

This reflective and inquiring stance ensures that your classroom is as inclusive and open as possible. Culturally responsive teaching is about creating a safe environment that supports all students' learning. The first step is to come to terms with who you are and what your cultural biases might be.

How can you get the most from this product?

1. Before conducting the workshop, view the video segment titled Full-Day Workshop. This workshop was conducted with a group of teachers outside Chicago. The video footage runs about 1 hour 45 minutes and will give you a sense of the different exercises included in the workshop and the types of conversations necessary for teachers to become culturally competent. The full-day footage serves as a model from which to build and personalize the workshop(s) to your own style and needs.
2. Familiarize yourself with the materials and resources, all of which can be printed off the DVD-ROM.

Materials and Resources:

- Terminology Sheet
- Discover Your Culture Framework (referred to on the video as "Focus on Your Culture Framework")
- Guidelines for Resolving Cultural Conflicts
- Cultural Conflict Discussion Possibilities sheet
- Conflict Importance and Pertinence sheet
- Resolution to Cultural Conflicts Assessment Questionnaire
- Sample Probing Questions for Facilitators
- Cultural Conflict Scenarios
- Additional Resources to Read and Discuss
- "Talking Race: Making a Space Where Teachers Can Talk About Differences," by Jenee Darden
- "Relevant: Beyond the Basics," by Jacqueline Jordan Irvine

3. Read through the guide and while you do so, think about your needs and the needs of the group members with whom you will be working. Consider the time frame you will work with the group. Is it a full day? A half day? Or will you meet with the group once a month for the year? Once a week? The beauty of this resource is that it can be used with any of these time structures. It can and should be tailored to your needs and the needs of the people with whom you work.
4. Complete your own Discover Your Culture Framework sheet so that you may use the information gleaned to help you facilitate the professional development experiences with other teachers.

How can you navigate the DVD?



When you insert the DVD, the root menu will appear. There are two main sections:

- ⦿ For Facilitators
- ⦿ For Participants

The For Facilitators section includes footage from the Full-Day Workshop. It runs sequentially as if you were watching her implement the workshop. As mentioned, it is about 1 hour 45 minutes, and we highly recommend you view this prior to facilitating a workshop.

Below the Full-Day Workshop, various segments from the full workshop are listed separately. When you click on a segment, you will be taken directly to that footage. This allows you to access specific material easily, which is important, because you may wish to view particular segments multiple times as you prepare for your workshop. In the guide, we have referenced some of these segments.

The next section of the DVD menu is For Participants. These segments are those that we suggest you share with the people attending your workshop. These segments, like the segments under For Facilitators, were pulled directly from the full-day workshop footage.

When you click on the various segment titles, you will be taken directly to that material. The running time for each segment is marked next to the segment title. Sharing these video segments with the participants will give you the opportunity to share Sonya's energy, enthusiasm, and knowledge with participants in your workshop. You may also use the footage to demonstrate to participants the types of exercises, discussions, and transformative thinking involved in taking part in this professional experience. Throughout the guide, we provide point of use suggestions for showing segments to the participants.



HOW TO ORGANIZE THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES

Sonya has developed four deeply engaging and important exercises that lead teachers through the process of becoming culturally competent.

Discover Your Culture

Scenarios for Small-Group Problem Solving: Successfully Addressing Cultural Conflicts

Small-Group Problem Solving: Successfully Addressing Your Own Cultural Conflicts

Assessing Our Responses to Cultural Conflicts

FACILITATOR'S TIP When working with teachers, provide them with a folder that includes all the materials you will be working with throughout the professional experience. It is also helpful to provide extra paper on which people can take notes.

This section outlines the pace of implementing the four exercises within a full-day, half-day, or one- to two-hour experience. Noted in the outlines is *when* to do the various exercises within a full-day, half-day, or one- to two-hour experience. *How* to implement each exercise is detailed in the next section of the guide (pages 11–21).

What might a full-day workshop look like?

During a full-day workshop, you will be able to go through all four of the exercises that support and develop culturally responsive thinking. Within the full-day structure below, break times, activity allocation times, as well as some transition guidance are provided.

Explain the purpose of the day, the idea that this is a professional *experience*, not just professional *development*.



⊙ **Introduce Terminology** (10–15 minutes)

- Introduce the vocabulary of culturally responsive teaching, which you have printed from the DVD resource section and which is also in participants' folders.

● **Generate and Chart Rules of Engagement (10–15 minutes)**

- Ask, “What type of environment has to exist in this room for you to be comfortable to take risks? To engage in meaningful and deep discussions about personal and difficult issues?” Record what participants say on chart paper or the LCD screen.
- If teachers do not note that participants should assume positive intent, you should add it. You can say something like, “You know what I find so important when I’m talking with people about difficult issues? I need to assume that their intentions are good. That they have positive intent. I think that is really important. Do you know what I mean?” You can then ask someone in the group to describe what “positive intent” means to them.

NOTES

- ◉ **Activity 1: Discover Your Culture** (1–1.5 hours)
 - Implementation details on pages 12–13
- ◉ **Break** (15 minutes)
- ◉ **Activity 2: Scenarios for Small-Group Problem Solving: Successfully Addressing Cultural Conflicts** (1–1.5 hours)
 - Implementation details on pages 14–17
- ◉ **12:00 Break for Lunch**
- ◉ **Welcome Back from Lunch** (5 minutes)
 - Briefly review what was discussed in the morning and explain what participants will engage in during the afternoon.
- ◉ **Activity 3: Small-Group Problem Solving: Successfully Addressing Your Own Cultural Conflicts** (1–1.5 hours)
 - Implementation details on pages 18–19
- ◉ **Break** (15 minutes)
- ◉ **Activity 4: Assessing Our Responses to Cultural Conflicts** (30 minutes)
 - Implementation details on pages 20–21
- ◉ **Closing** (10–15 minutes)
 - Generate a list of ideas for how teachers will bring this work back to their schools and/or classrooms.
 - Thank participants for their open and honest work. Encourage them to do something miraculous.
 - View video segment Sonya's Hopes (01:05). There is not one single right way to respond to a cultural conflict. However, we can learn to recognize them when they occur and act: “Whatever we do, we need to *do something*.”

NOTES

What might a half-day workshop look like?

During a half-day workshop, you will be able to complete two of the four exercises. Getting the most out of this resource and work requires talk time. Therefore, it is more beneficial for teachers to do fewer exercises deeply rather than complete all the exercises in a quick and shallow way. It is important that you are able to schedule *two* half-day workshops so that teachers can benefit from going through the entire experience.

If you have only a single half day to spend with teachers and introduce the concept of culturally responsive teaching, you can still complete two of the four exercises. Then your subsequent work might happen during one- to two-hour-long sessions before or after school. What that type of structure might look like is outlined next.

⦿ **Welcome** (10–15 minutes)

FACILITATOR'S TIP For your first meeting, see **Welcome, Introduce Terminology, and Generate and Chart Rules of Engagement** from full-day outline page 6.

If this is not your first meeting with teachers, in order to set the tone and start moving teachers' thinking in the right direction:

- Explain the purpose of the day and what participants should expect.
- Review the rules of engagement and the prior learnings before beginning the new content.
- Have teachers report back how the work from previous sessions has influenced the way they interact with their peers and their students. Basically, ask, "How's it going?"

⦿ **First exercise** (1–1.5 hours)

- *First time you meet:* Discover Your Culture (implementation details on pages 12–13)
- *Second time you meet:* Small-Group Problem Solving: Successfully Addressing Your Own Cultural Conflicts (implementation details on pages 18–19)

⦿ **Break** (15 minutes)

- ⦿ **Second exercise** (1–1.5 hours)
 - *First time you meet:* Scenarios for Small-Group Problem Solving: Successfully Addressing Cultural Conflicts (implementation details on pages 14–17)
 - *Second time you meet:* Assessing Our Responses to Cultural Conflicts (implementation details on pages 20–21)
- ⦿ **Closing** (10–15 minutes)
 - Generate a list of ideas for how teachers will bring this work back to their schools and/or classrooms.

FACILITATOR'S CHOICE At the end of your first meeting, you might ask teachers to generate a list of cultural conflicts they encounter in their schools and bring the list to your next meeting. You can provide them with the Cultural Conflict Discussion Possibilities sheet for recording these conflicts. Or you might give them the Resolution to Cultural Conflicts Assessment Questionnaire and ask them to fill that out before your next meeting. This questionnaire will help to scaffold their reflections on the day. Both of these forms can be found in the resource section of the DVD.

- Remind them of your next meeting time.
- Thank them for their open, honest, and deep thinking.

What might you do if you meet with the group over a period of time?

When meeting with teachers once a week or once a month, you obviously move more slowly. However, meeting over a period of time with participants does provide benefits:

1. You can go deeper.
2. Participants' comfort level grows, and therefore it is easier for them to engage in deep conversations.
3. It provides a greater chance that culturally responsive thinking will become internalized.
4. It affords you flexibility. In one of the beginning sessions, you might consider generating a list of cultural conflicts, and throughout your time together, you can work through the list.
5. It enables you to have meta-discussions about the similarities among conflicts and the productive solutions.

◉ Welcome

FACILITATOR'S TIP For your first meeting, see *Welcome, Introduce Terminology, and Generate and Chart Rules of Engagement* from the full-day outline, page 6.

If this is not your first meeting with teachers, in order to set the tone and start moving teachers' thinking in the right direction:

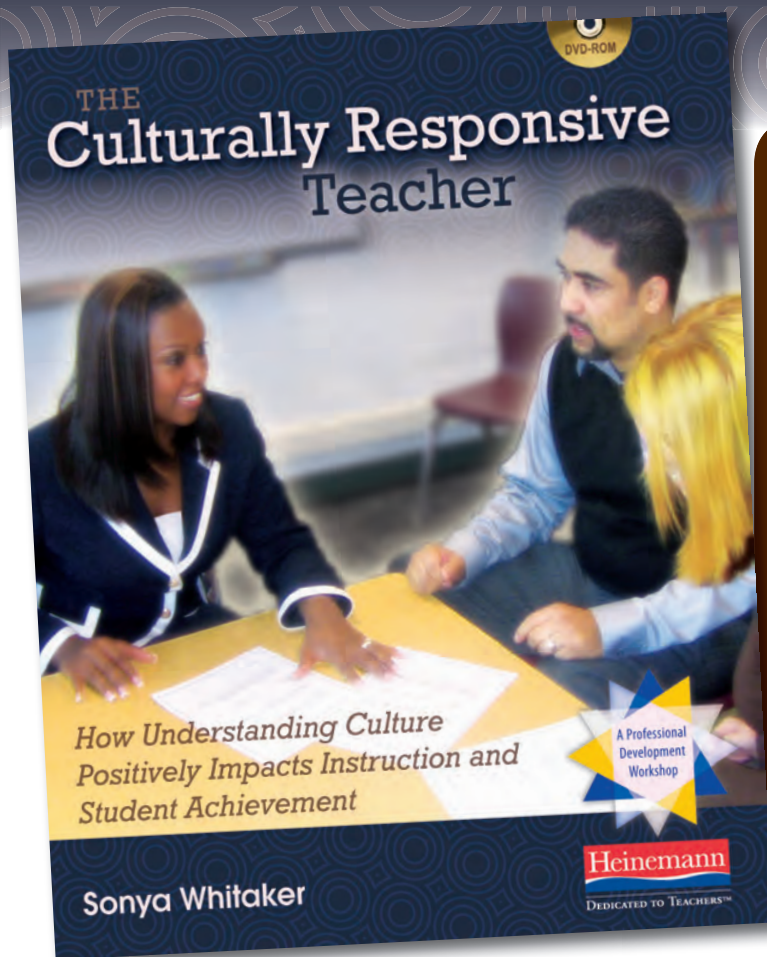
- Explain the purpose of the day and what participants should expect.
- Review the rules of engagement and the prior learnings before beginning the new content.
- Have teachers report back how the work from previous sessions has influenced the way they interact with their peers and their students. Basically, ask, "How's it going?"

◉ Activity

- *Complete one of the exercises* or use a session to review and celebrate how teachers' cultural competencies are increasing. Remember to use the introduce, gather, engage, share, synthesize, assess structure highlighted on page 11.

FACILITATOR'S TIP A potential difficulty of working with teachers over a period of time is that in the beginning, it might take longer for teachers to understand the content. Ideally, you might have a half-day workshop or a full-day workshop to introduce teachers to these concepts and then have follow-up sessions throughout the year.

PD to resolve teachers' cultural conflicts so students can improve their achievement



Guide teachers through the simple, safe staff development workshop on **Sonya Whitaker's Culturally Responsive Teacher**. They'll soon be empowered to:

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- improve the accuracy of their assessments
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Gr. K-12 / 978-0-325-02951-1 / DVD + facilitator's guide / \$250.00

“There are cultural conflicts taking place in classrooms across the entire country. Teachers need a safe place to figure out what is happening so that they can be about the business of dramatically increasing student achievement. They need their parking-lot conversations to take place in a professional development workshop.”

—Sonya Whitaker

“How can I connect with a student that I don’t look like?”



It’s a question usually saved for the parking lot. In *The Culturally Responsive Teacher*, **Sonya Whitaker** shows you how to provide a safe, respectful, and professional place for teachers to discuss cultural conflicts and learn to be culturally responsive educators.

With strong emphasis on supporting higher student achievement, *The Culturally Responsive Teacher* provides everything a facilitator needs:

- The DVD shows how to present the workshop and includes video for participants.
- The facilitator’s guide walks through the workshop and supports half-, full-, or multiple-day sessions.
- All handouts and two additional readings are printable from the DVD.

.....
“Regardless of the resources available to teachers and the time and energy they are putting forth to ensure that all students experience academic success, there is a group of students who are failing miserably in their classrooms. And teachers want a safe place to talk about it.”

—Sonya Whitaker
.....

Gr. K–12 / 978-0-325-02951-1 / DVD + facilitator’s guide / \$250.00



As a Superintendent, a former Director for Academic Improvement in the Chicago area, a nationally known consultant, and a former teacher, **Sonya Whitaker** is passionate about ensuring that all students experience academic success. *The Culturally Responsive Teacher* grew from classroom experiences that showed how cultural conflicts suppressed student’s engagement—and how resolving these conflicts can dramatically increases their performance.

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