

Foreword

School administrators facing issues of accountability, diversity, and no child left behind expectations may benefit from a work that presents a process by which to respond to these challenges. The process is not a quick fix, recipe, or the answer to serious issues. However, the process does address questions such as the following: How culturally proficient am I? How culturally proficient is my school? What are the stages by which I and my school become culturally proficient? How can I tell if we are making progress? How is this proficiency related to the relationships I need to develop and sustain? How do these relationships and our cultural proficiency relate to our accountability to our constituents? How is cultural proficiency linked to the improvement of student performance?

The Culturally Proficient School focuses on cultural proficiency as a concept that calls for school leaders to respond to the challenges facing them in their schools and communities. The issue of differences in the school organization is dealt with from the standpoint of the leaders. These differences are conceived as cultural, which call for some response that may consist of six stages: cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural precompetence, cultural competence, and cultural proficiency. These stages range from purging cultures to honoring differences among cultures. Leader behaviors, values, and attitudes are dealt with to illustrate how culturally proficient leaders succeed in bringing about improvement in student performance.

This book is a friendly invitation to consider and try certain strategies to improve the culture of schools and to become culturally proficient. A valuable contribution of this work is that the responsibility for the betterment of schools is firmly lodged on the leadership of the organization as well as others. Cultural proficiency is a type of relationship that exists between the leader and others but also between members of the organization and community. How that relationship is developed, nurtured, and strengthened is systematically presented.

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As an instructional strategy, the use of the Maple View case and the practical “how to” chapters are particularly effective. The case presents a picture of reality we have all experienced, whereas the “how to, can do” chapters reflect a spirit of optimism and well-crafted strategies to help leaders and others to develop cultural proficiency. This is not a simple step-by-step description of assuming attitudes, behaviors, and values advocated by the authors as consisting of cultural proficiency. Instead, it is a work that demands reflection, experimentation, and insight into organizational and personal aspects of associating with one another.

Inasmuch as the authors express modest intentions of this book, the value of this work for me lies in the clarity of the relationship between the case, the conceptual framework, and the call for leadership and organizational purpose. It is rare to find a work that is pragmatic, data based, and theoretically sound with the potential to not only impact the preparation of school leaders but also elevate the possibilities for our schools and youth.

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