Culturally Responsive: Educator Mindset and Action

Checking our Privilege

>> The first strategy to deal with equity is self-awareness. Every teacher must sit back and analyze their own conditioning, their own biases, their own beliefs. Only when you get a sense of your own ethnocentrism can you begin to look at your attitude towards others. When we realize how much we have been conditioned to think stereotypically about certain groups, that’s where it begins. And then it moves from inside out.

>> Some of the challenge is, identifying our own biases. Identifying our prejudice. Identifying that we have to learn about this. Identifying the fact that we don’t do this regularly.

>> We need to continue on the path of understanding equity and inclusive education practices. We need to be reflective of what we bring to the classroom, and the bias that we bring to the classroom, and to be very cautious about what that does in terms of the resources we choose, what we consider to be right or wrong answers, what we consider to be valid knowledge.

>> So what did you do to make it easier for you?

>> Educators who are culturally responsive come to understand the role that power and privilege play in their own minds, and work to understand the role these play in the lives of their students. I always say I’m a visitor to this community. I’m not part of this community, because I don’t live here, I didn’t grow up here. But I’ve been in the community, working and volunteering for a long time. So I know the community in my own way. But I really figured more about the community through the students.

>> Last year, what we did was, we looking at carding. So we looked at the statistics for carding in Toronto. As a white woman as well coming in and using this material, I was very up front when we started, and I said, "I will never be carded." And one of my boys said, "You can’t be sure of that." And I said, "No, I can absolutely sure." I mean, there’s so much to learn from the students. I think that’s a big part of it, right? I just feel that we’re a community together, learning. So I might be facilitating things, but I’m checking my privilege. I’m not going to stand up in front of the class and pretend that I’m disseminating knowledge about this. Is there anywhere that they can go to a website and find out if we can build a website to go with it?

>> No, we can do that. And there’s also supposed to be, like, writing on the wall...

>> For students to learn, they need to feel comfortable in the space. And you don’t walk into a building assuming that you have all the answers. And the learning has to be able to go both ways.
> Ultimately, teachers care about their students. They want their students to do well. So when they see the impact that their own learning has on their students, then they're motivated. They get past their fear and the trepidation about stepping on people’s toes, or saying the wrong thing. They can move past that when they know how important it is.

> I think that people are going to stumble along the way. Nothing is perfect. And I think that often, we don't want to rule something out unless we know that it's perfect. However, I think that great learning is sometimes messy. It doesn't have to be messy, but when it is messy, we need to still embrace it as great learning. We don't have to have all the answers. What we need to do is have a willingness to listen to students, listen to their interests, and try to build curriculum that is centred around their experiences, around who they are as people, around their questions.

> Teachers are -- I would say that they're becoming more comfortable with the gap in their knowledge. That's important for a number of reasons. Once they identify that and are comfortable with it, then it seems they're in a place where they can take action to address it.