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Acknowledgements

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The committee also extends thanks to national consultant, Dr. James M. Patton, College of William and Mary, who provided technical assistance to the committee throughout the creation of the guide.

Thanks to all of the members of the Disproportionality Committee, past and present, who worked collaboratively to develop this document.

Committee Co-Chairs
Lea Woolsey-Supervisor of Special Education Instructional Programs
Maria Whittemore-Minority Achievement Coordinator

Committee Members
Patrice Harper-Parent and Community Representative
Beverley Tuggle-Community Representative
Becky Koontz-High School Director
Tracey Lucas-Middle School Director
Sherry Collette-Elementary Director
Vicky Stultz-Elementary Director
Keith Harris-Elementary Director
Barbara Nash –Principal, Waverley Elementary School
Everett Warren –Principal, Monocacy Middle School
Brooke Anthony-Assistant Principal, Windsor Knolls
Cindy Glass-Pupil Personnel Worker
Rollo Jones- School Psychologist
Greta Nettleton- Guidance Counselor, Lewistown Elementary
Marie Haney-PBIS/CPI Teacher Specialist
Tess Blumenthal-Principal, Valley Elementary School
Mitch Ginsburgh-School Psychologist
Jennifer Thomas-School Psychologist
Christy Polce-Guidance Counselor, Urbana High School
Aaron Phillips-Principal, Heather Ridge School
Willie Mahone-Private Citizen and Community Activist
Tim Policastro-Pupil Personnel Worker

The committee would like to extend a special thank you to Melinda Wright, who retired as Supervisor of Special Education in the fall of 2008, and served as the co-chair from 2006-2008.
Use of the Guide

This guide is designed to be a quick reference for student services teams (SST) as they engage in problem solving techniques to meet the academic and behavioral needs of students. The purpose of the SST process is to address concerns regarding student progress in the classroom through a series of thoughtful and purposeful stages. The goal of the process is to provide appropriate and culturally responsive interventions and exhaust all general education options.

In order to prevent, and/or reduce the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education, a systemic model has been developed to effectively address the processes under which culturally responsive student services teams operate.

After careful study and much discussion, it was determined some elements of the student services team processes need to be standardized across the system while at the same time allowing for flexibility in schools at both elementary and secondary levels.

The guide has been formatted to make navigation simple and user friendly for school based educational professionals and stakeholders as they develop recommendations for effective and culturally responsive interventions in the classroom.
**FCPS History**

*February 1998-* Through a voluntary partnership agreement with MSDE, the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) identified FCPS as one of the local school systems which had a disproportionate representation of African American students in special education. As a result, OCR recommendations included that FCPS provide intervention before special education referrals, analyze and self-monitor data, examine placement trends, provide staff training, share best practices, and involve parents and community members.

*January 1999-* Key FCPS personnel worked to develop an action plan.

*March 1999-* FCPS sent a team to the Maryland State Disproportionality Conference.

*July 1999-* FCPS received a grant from MSDE to address the disproportionate identification of minority students in special education.

*September 1999-* FCPS created a Disproportionality Steering Committee. The charge of the committee was three-fold:
1. Oversee the plan’s implementation by August 2000
2. Identify trends in the identification of African American students with disabilities
3. Ensure that FCPS educators are trained to deliver instruction that meets the needs of all students

*April 2000-* Dr. Anthony Sims, of the Elementary and Middle School Technical Assistance Center, conducted training with FCPS Administrators and School Improvement Teams across the county.

*July 2000-* MSDE contracted with a team from George Washington University to review the FCPS special education files of all African American students identified as emotionally disturbed or mentally retarded along with an equal number of Caucasian students in the two disability categories.

*2003-2004-* FCPS used grant funds to support the expansion of PBIS into three new schools and secured the services of Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu for two one half day professional development sessions designed to increase cultural competencies with African American students for staff from targeted schools. Another consultant, Dr. Ron Ferguson from the John F. Kennedy School of Government Howard University, provided training for administrators related to content, pedagogy and relationships.

*2004-* Reauthorization of IDEA

*2005-2006-* MSDE data identified FCPS as significantly disproportionate. FCPS was required to provide early intervening services through general education. Approximately 15% of federal funding had to be used to develop and implement early intervening services for students who required additional academic and behavioral support in order to succeed in general education.

*2006-* The FCPS Disproportionality Committee reinstituted with the Minority Student Achievement Coordinator and Supervisor of Special Education as co-chairs of the committee.
The committee reviewed the history of prior committee work, examined data and developed an action plan. One identified action was to engage the services of national consultant, Dr. James Patton, for professional development with targeted schools, including staff from early intervening services schools.

2007-The FCPS Disproportionality Committee contracted the services of Dr. James M. Patton for technical assistance in the development of a systemic model for culturally responsive Student Services Teams.

2008- The FCPS Disproportionality Committee developed the Culturally Responsive Student Services Team Reference Guide under the leadership of Melinda Wright, Maria Whittemore and Lea Woolsey and in consultation with Dr. James M. Patton.
A variety of student problems and classroom difficulties can lead to the initiation of the Student Services Team (SST) process. A Culturally Responsive Student Services Team must realize that this is a complex decision and many factors must be considered. Initially, the Culturally Responsive Student Services Team should consider the following:

- Academic Problems and significance of discrepancy in performance.
- Social-Emotional Problems and impact on academic performance.
- Behavioral Issues including frequency, duration and intensity.
- Communication Problems related to comprehension and expression.

Following the identification of significant discrepancies in student performance in any or all of the aforementioned areas, the team must also consider whether student difficulties are impacted by cultural or environmental differences. These may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Student’s cultural/environmental background
- Potential language differences/English Language Learners
- Student/s socio-economic status

If discrepancies in student academic performance are identified, the classroom teacher should proceed through stages 1-3 as outlined in the Culturally Responsive SST Process as outlined on page 8 of this manual. These stages include the following:

- Stage 1- Pre-SST Action
- Stage 2- SST Process Initiation
- Stage 3- SST Review
Stage 1- Pre-SST Action:

- Clearly analyze and define the nature of the student’s academic/behavioral difficulty.
- Evaluate the significance of the student’s difficulty with regard to grade level academic standards and same-aged peer performance.
- Consider if the student’s academic and/or behavioral difficulties appear to be related to other factors that need to be considered (i.e. attendance, medical conditions, cultural background, etc.)
- Consider the consistency of academic and behavioral difficulties with regard to a variety of content areas, environments and the student’s response to multiple educators.
- Consider parental input and concerns.
- Analyze the effectiveness of Tier I interventions. Maintain a log of strategies implemented to address student needs.
- Consider the input of multiple resources and related professionals.
- Collect and analyze student work samples.
- Communicate specific concerns with parents or guardians. Be sure to notify them of the student's challenges and request parental input. Document all communication and attempts.
- Collect and organize student work samples.

Stage 2-SST Process Initiation:

- Prepare documentation and information to attend the SST meeting. Be prepared to provide a description of the problem, work samples, anecdotal records, updated information and assessments, response to intervention, etc. Be sure that information provided is factual and based on data collection regarding student performance. Avoid providing descriptors based on personal judgment.
- Locate student demographic and background information (e.g., name, address, parent/guardian information, promotion/retention history, attendance). This information can be found in the student's cumulative file.
- Discuss student cultural and environmental concerns as well as any medically related issues that you are aware of and how these issues may impact student performance.
- Document ongoing parent/guardian communication.

Stage 3-SST Review:

- Be prepared to present documentation and information regarding student response to interventions initiated since the previous Student Services Team meeting. Provide data, anecdotal records, updated information and assessments, along with any data collected.
- Highlight any changes in student program, instructional/behavioral strategies, academic interventions or any additional resources that should be considered by the Student Services Team.
In order to prevent disproportionate identification of culturally and linguistically diverse students in special education, all staff members must have knowledge of how culture may be impacting student academic achievement and behavior. During this problem solving process, the Student Services Team needs to recommend interventions that are culturally responsive.

**Culturally Responsive SST Process**

Stage 1 -Pre-SST Action

Review student background information including student academic and medical records, background, work samples, assessment data, attendance, prior teacher’s feedback, behavioral concerns, etc.

Discuss student concerns with appropriate professionals including grade level team members, reading specialists, interventionists, guidance counselor, school support teachers, etc.

Identify Tier 1 interventions being implemented.

Classroom teacher must inform parents of concerns.

Stage 2-SST Process Initiation

Complete SST referral form (see sample).

Provide documentation to the SST Chairperson identified for the school. This may be the school administrator or administrative designee (i.e. guidance counselor, reading specialist).

SST Chairperson will schedule meeting to include appropriate staff members.

Multidisciplinary Student Services Team will meet to discuss the student and determine an action plan including culturally responsive recommended interventions.

Summarize results via SST notes (see sample).

Notes will be maintained by the SST Chairperson.
Stage 3-SST Review

SST Chairperson will schedule progress review meeting.

Multidisciplinary team will reconvene to determine progress and/or next steps (i.e. modifying strategies, intensifying delivery of interventions, deleting interventions, changing the setting of the intervention, modifying the materials used, providing additional or modified accommodations and considering additional resources or interventions).

Summarize results via SST notes (see sample).
Notes will be maintained by SST Chairperson.


If the student is not responsive to appropriate and culturally responsive academic/behavioral interventions or strategies put in place through general education, the Student Services Team may consider a Special Education screening meeting as appropriate.
Leadership and makeup of the Student Services Team should be multidisciplinary and structured so that the process is owned by general education.

Leadership of the process should be conducted by an administrator and/or administrative designee with an appropriate knowledge base regarding learning and behavior problems.

Members of the Student Services Team may include, but are not limited to the following members with knowledge of the student’s academic and behavioral performance and cultural background: Administrator, referring teacher, related service providers, guidance counselor, reading specialist, math specialists, interventionists, school support teacher, special educator, Speech/Language Pathologist, school psychologist, school nurse, CASS, PPW, cultural broker, Education That is Multicultural contact, student and parent as appropriate.
A referral to the SST is a problem-solving process to support a teacher in developing interventions to help a student. The SST will help the teacher/staff to develop individualized academic and/or behavioral interventions that are culturally responsive.

Demographic Information:

Student Name: ___________________ Date of referral: _______________________

Student Grade: _____ Retained: _____ Parent/Guardian: _______________________

Date of Birth: ___________________ Race/Ethnicity: ___________________________

Special Education: Y or N? _______ Submitted by: _____________________________

Medical Information:

Medical conditions or medications: __________________________________________

Hearing/vision screening: (Dates and Results) ________________________________

Instructional Levels:

Elementary:    Reading _______ Math _______ Writing _______
                Science _______ SS _______

Secondary:    English/LA _______ Math _______
                Science _______ SS _______

Parent contact initiated: yes   no

Comments: ______________________________________________________________

Reason for Referral:

___ Attendance    ___ Attention/Organization
___ Listening Comprehension ___ Mathematics
___ Oral Expression   ___ Reading
___ Behavior      ___ Visual Motor Coordination
___ Memory        ___ Suspension
___ Written Expression ___ Other
Current Supports:

- CASS
- Prior Special Ed services
- School tutoring
- ILP
- Health/medication
- Guidance
- Other agencies (specify)

Outside tutoring
Reading/Math Specialist
504 plan
Outside counseling
ELL
parent/guardian

Interventions attempted/implemented:

Academic

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<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Evidence of Success</th>
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Behavioral

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<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Evidence of Success</th>
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Cultural Considerations (Please attach Team Checklist for Culturally Responsive Practice)

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<th>Interventions</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Evidence of Success</th>
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Attachments: Please attach any additional information for discussion (most recent grades, work samples/portfolio, behavior contract, previous teaming concerns).

Meeting Notes:

- Identify problem
- Set goals for expected performance
- Discuss academic / behavioral interventions, including culturally responsive interventions attempted
- Develop method(s) to measure progress
- Establish case review schedule
- List participants
## Follow-up:

<table>
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<th>Recommended Interventions</th>
<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Evidence of Success</th>
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**Review Date(s):**  

---------------------------------------------------------------------
**Team Checklist for Culturally Responsive Practices**

**Directions:**
- Review and discuss the statements below as they relate to the overall educational experience of the student being referred.
- Based on areas of need identified below, please make note of culturally responsive interventions to be implemented.

Although there are additional cultural considerations to be made for each student, this checklist provides a framework for SST discussions as it reflects on culturally responsive practices. An additional resource that may be useful in developing culturally responsive practices can be found at [http://knowledgeloom.org](http://knowledgeloom.org).

### Assessment of Classroom Environment

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<tr>
<td><strong>Yes</strong></td>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>The classroom environment, classroom activities, instruction and disciplinary practices are reflective of the culture of the student</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiple perspectives and materials that provide alternative explanations and worldviews are incorporated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunities for conversation in the classroom about the student’s home, family, and community culture exist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunities exist to bring the student’s home, family, and community cultures into the classroom, including the use of cultural traditions, community history, music, art, language, and literature</td>
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<tr>
<td>Units, lessons, and/or activities illustrate the connections among and between diverse groups in this country</td>
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<tr>
<td>The classroom environment allows the teacher and student to feel comfortable sharing their cultural heritage/background</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural strengths, supports, and barriers of the student are identified</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom lessons and activities are connected to larger school, district, or community initiatives that are related to culture and cultural competence</td>
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**Culturally responsive interventions needed:**

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Adapted from Classroom to Community and Back, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon.
LOOKING WITHIN TO BETTER RELATE OUTSIDE

The checklist that is embedded in the manual is designed to guide the SST as it problem solves and searches for evidence based culturally responsive practices useful for classroom purposes. This narrative, however, is designed to assist you, as individuals, to better understand *culture*, its *impact* and *cultural differences* and to explore, examine and critically analyze the oftentimes invisible cultural, class and linguistic “knapsacks” that all individuals bring to their experiences interacting with learners. This form of cultural assessment or self-inspection is a critical first step to becoming culturally competent. Yet, as human beings, we can tend to be reluctant to explore our own culturally embedded perceptions, assumptions, stereotypes about self and others, predilections, images of self and our non-selves, as well as other ingredients contained in our invisible cultural knapsacks. We naturally seem more comfortable searching for “specks in other people’s eyes”, while sometimes holding boulders in our own. Self-knowledge and the corresponding positive change that should accompany it, then, becomes the essential first step along the path of becoming culturally competent. Figure 1.0 contains a depiction of that Cultural Knapsack.

Figure 1.0

Examining our Cultural and Class Knapsack
In Order to Be Culturally and Interculturally Competent—Cultural Assessment or Cultural Therapy

- Assumptions about the Self and the “Other”
- Perceptions and Predilections of the “Other”
- Images of the “Other”
- Stereotyping and Beliefs of the “Other”
- Stereotyping and Cultural Imagination
All that we know about culture is that it is used as a lens through which we view the world, form values, analyze thoughts and ideas and relate to other people. Culture exists at a number of levels of authenticity or realness from surface forms of culture, to folk levels and finally to deep culture. The exploration that is called for here asks all parties to assess themselves particularly beneath the cultural surface down to deep cultural levels as depicted in the Iceberg Model of Culture contained in Figure 2.0.

Figure 2.0

Those deep cultural elements contained in the iceberg represent those elements of culture that we need to unpack, assess, reflect upon, internalize and positively respond to if we are to be culturally competent and utilize culturally responsive practices.

All that we know about culture leads us to the conclusion that certain values and issues of power and privilege underscore our relationships with ourselves and our non-selves. Questions, such as our understanding of power dynamics with regard to race, class and language and how these dynamics inform our relationships with learners, beg to be answered in this form of self-inspection. Questions relative to the role that culture, cultural differences, class and language play in the classroom are called to mind here as we explore our own biases, personal assumptions and other elements in that invisible knapsack. As we individually strive to be more
culturally competent and responsive in our relationships and practices, this form of cultural assessment pushes us to ask ourselves if we know the cultural, class and linguistic backgrounds of our learners to include the cultural norms, values and expectations in which they operate. Do we incorporate and build upon their cultural, class and linguistic capital in our practices? Do our lessons and practices with these culturally and linguistically diverse (cld) learners better help them to understand and negotiate culture, class and language differences in the classroom, school and the larger world is another question raised in this self-assessment/inspection process. Further, if we wish to grow to be more culturally competent, this form of assessment will prompt us to constantly ask if our relationships with our cld learners encourage them to search their own knapsacks and deep cultural levels so that they can more deeply explore and know themselves in order to develop more healthy and potentially transformative relationships with themselves, other individuals and other systems.

So, this cultural competency journey, that is truly developmental, requires that we constantly in deep ways self-assess, reflect upon this inspection, develop deep cultural knowledge and experience with self and our non-selves and engage in positive change that will enable us to assist others, especially our colleagues, students and their families, to engage in similar processes. The importance for all of us to continue this inward reflection that is designed to positively transform our cultural selves to better connect with our non-selves and then engage in positive change cannot be overstated in today’s culturally diverse world that is becoming more so each day. You are encouraged to explore excerpts about culturally responsive practices and teaching that are contained in the knowledge loom document found at http://knowledgeloom.org. Additionally, this manual contains a reference list and list of websites that will assist you in this lifelong journey to self-assessment and cultural competence.

Following, you will find several case studies describing students at the elementary, middle and high school levels. These scenarios reflect academic and behavioral concerns, as well as cultural and linguistic considerations, for the Student Services Team to consider throughout its problem solving process. Each of these case studies is accompanied by a sample of a completed SST referral form. The purpose of these case studies is to provide a representation or model of what the process may look like for school-based teams.

Narrative provided by Dr. James M. Patton
Elementary Scenario- Student Services Team Guide

The information presented below is not meant to stereotype in any way. It is based on cultural tendencies which are the tendencies of the majority of people in a cultural group to hold certain values, beliefs and engage in certain behaviors.

However not all students from the cultural group will exhibit the cultural patterns. To avoid stereotyping, it is necessary to test the child’s individual cultural tendencies against the cultural tendencies of the ethnic group he or she is a part of. The information below is designed to help us better serve those who do fit the group cultural tendencies patterns.

Background Information

Juan is a third grade Hispanic student. He is of Mexican heritage and lives with his mother and three younger siblings.

Current Situation

He is currently demonstrating belligerent and oppositional behavior toward staff members. This is especially true with regard to females. Among his peers Juan exhibits bullying behaviors and frequent fighting. During classroom time he demonstrates disruptive attention seeking behaviors and experiences difficulty staying on task.

When engaged however, Juan presents himself as a bright student who is capable of completing grade level work. Unfortunately, very little work is initiated or completed therefore his grades have been adversely affected.

Ethnicity- Juan’s country of origin is Mexico. His ethnicity is Hispanic.

In the case study it says “he is currently demonstrating belligerent and oppositional behavior towards staff members, especially women” and “among his peers he exhibits bullying behaviors and frequent fighting.”

Ethnic cultural considerations

- Is machismo possibly coming into play for Juan and his behavior in the classroom towards females? Machismo is an exaggerated sense of masculinity stressing the following attributes: physical courage, virility, domination of women and aggressiveness. The Mexican male is defined by the ability to be macho in the eyes of those who he is in contact with. The male is perceived as dominant and strong whereas the female is perceived as nurturing and self sacrificing.

- Does Juan lower his eyes in the presence of adults? Is that interpreted as being disrespectful? Lowering the eyes in the presence of an adult is a learned mandatory behavior to show respect in Mexico.
• How close do the teacher and or students stand in relationship to Juan as they communicate with him? The culturally determined distance maintained between people is much smaller for Mexicans than for Anglos. Juan may be misinterpreting where the teacher or his classmates place themselves, in relation to him, when interacting with him. The 2-3 feet preferred by European Americans may be being seen as cold, unfriendly or as a way to show superiority.

• What is Juan’s relationship with his teacher? For some students whose background is Mexican, the relationship with the teacher can strongly influence their behavior and perception of school. Some students have very strong interest in people and respond to people’s emotional expressions. Some are very sensitive to praise and criticism.

• Does Juan seek assistance often? Hispanic parents tend to expect their children to be quiet and obedient in school and seek advice and approval before acting. For some students whose background is Mexican there is a need for continuous feedback and coaching from the teacher.

• Has the teacher assessed Juan regarding learning styles? Many Hispanic students tend to be field dependent, group oriented and cooperative. Many Hispanic students come from a collectivist’s position where cooperation is valued and less value is placed on individual competition.

Gender cultural considerations

• Does the teacher understand that many behaviors of boys and girls are neurologically based and boys are more naturally aggressive? There is less oxytocin in the male neural and physiological system which leads boys to tend to be more aggressive and less reliant on bonding. Boys tend to have less desire to comply, to please others including the teacher.

• Does the teacher understand that male frontal lobe development is less active than girls and develops later than girls? This leads to boys being more impulsive than girls and often boys are less able to sit still.

• Does the teacher know boys get bored easier than girls? Girls are better at self regulating boredom. When a boy is bored, this can result in acting out in ways that disrupt the class and may result in him being labeled as a behavioral problem.

• Does the teacher understand boys go in and out of neural rest states that are characterized by behaviors such as drifting off, zoning out or falling asleep? To avoid these neural rest states boys may become disruptive.

• Does the teacher know the natural assets boys tend to bring before the classroom? Impulsivity, single task focus, spatial kinesthetic learners.
Some culturally responsive interventions recommendations

- Be sure a culture broker is a part of the school services team discussions.

- Further information needs to be gathered about Juan and his role in the family. The culture broker could be responsible for bringing that information back to the team. For example, Juan is the oldest of 4, much more information needs to be gathered regarding his roles and responsibilities in the home which will help the team get a better understanding how those roles may be playing out in the classroom.

- A psychologist should be part of the school services team discussion so that he/she can make recommendations regarding how to help Juan reframe his behavior for school. He may need to be explicitly taught the behaviors.

- Provide lots of opportunities for movement and kinesthetic learning step by step processes for work assigned, and allow more time for transitions.

- The teacher needs to examine lessons to be sure there are a variety of learning activities in order to keep Juan’s attention.

- Consider discussing providing a male mentor for Juan.
The information presented below is not meant to stereotype in any way. It is based on cultural tendencies which are the tendencies of the majority of people in a cultural group to hold certain values, beliefs and engage in certain behaviors.

However not all students from the cultural group will exhibit the cultural patterns. To avoid stereotyping, it is necessary to test the child’s individual cultural tendencies against the cultural tendencies of the ethnic group he or she is a part of. The information below is designed to help us better serve those who do fit the group cultural tendencies patterns.

Background Information

David is a thirteen year old African American 8\textsuperscript{th} grade student. He lives with his parents and three younger siblings. Both parents work and David and his family live in an upscale middle class neighborhood.

Current Situation

David has been referred to the SST by his Math teacher. The teacher is concerned about David’s academic performance in Math. He is currently in a merit level class where he receives mostly C’s and D’s. Recently David has not been turning in homework, and participating appropriately in class. His teacher says he has been taking on the role of class clown.

His grade is slipping to the D/F range. The teacher reports David is up and around the room a lot. The teacher says he seems to rely too much on his peers instead of paying attention during instruction. When the teacher is speaking David often says things out loud during instruction such as, “Now I get it. So that’s how you do that.” The teacher finds David’s remarks distracting and disrespectful. When David is disciplined for calling out, the teacher reports he becomes belligerent argumentative and refuses to do the work.

Race/Ethnicity- David’s race is Black. David’s parents were both born in the United States and identify themselves and their children as African American. His cultural background /ethnicity is African American.

In the case study it says that David’s grades are slipping in Math. He has not been turning in homework and participating appropriately in class. He is taking on the role of class clown. He is up and around a lot and relies too much on his peers instead of paying attention during instruction. David talks out loud when the teacher is instructing which the teacher finds distracting and disrespectful. David becomes belligerent and argumentative and refuses to do the work when he is disciplined for calling out.
Ethnic Cultural Considerations

- Is David demonstrating a **cool pose**? Cool pose is a ritualized form of masculinity among many African American males. The behaviors described as class clowning may be carefully crafted behaviors that are designed to send the message of pride, strength and control.

- What is David’s relationship with his teacher? For some African American male students the relationship with the teacher strongly influences their behavior and perception of school. Some students have very strong interest in people and respond to people’s emotional expressions. Some are very sensitive to praise and criticism.

- Has the teacher assessed David’s learning styles? Many African American students tend to be holistic (field dependent) learners. Many students are group oriented and believe in cooperation. Many come from a collectivist’s position where cooperation is valued and less value is placed on individual competition. Many students are participatory learners. They engage in call and response. Call and response is a natural African American discourse strategy used by some students automatically. Call and response is spontaneous verbal and non verbal interactions between a speaker and a listener. In this case statements by David’s teacher (call) elicited expressions (responses) from David.

Gender cultural considerations

- Does the teacher understand that many behaviors of boys and girls are neurologically based and boys are more naturally aggressive? There is less oxytocin in the male neural and physiological system which leads boys to tend to be more aggressive and less reliant on bonding. Boys tend to have less desire to comply, to please others including the teacher.

- Does the teacher understand male frontal lobe development is less active than girls and develops later than girls? This leads to boys being more impulsive than girls and often boys are less able to sit still.

- Does the teacher know boys get bored easier than girls? Girls are better at self regulating boredom. When boys are bored this can result in acting out in way that disrupt the class and may result in him being labeled a behavioral problem.

- Does the teacher know the natural assets boys bring to the classroom? Impulsivity, single task focus, spatial kinesthetic learners.
Some culturally responsive interventions recommendations

- Be sure a culture broker is a part of the school services team discussions.

- Provide information for the teacher on call and response so that the teacher no longer views this behavior as something negative.

- The teacher needs to examine lessons to be sure there are a variety of learning activities in order to keep David’s attention.

- Provide lots of opportunities for movement and kinesthetic learning.

- Incorporate cooperative learning strategies which will allow for David’s interactions with his peers.
High School Scenario- Student Services Team Guide

Being culturally responsive is to be knowledgeable and sensitive to issues of race and ethnicity. Ignoring students’ racial identities and being “color blind” is actually a disservice to all students. Experts recognize that biracial identity development is different from that of Whites and minorities. The process of developing an identity is particularly complex for multiracial youth. Not until the 2000 Census were Americans able to identify themselves as multiracial. Until very recently it has not been politically correct to acknowledge and celebrate multiracial identities. Unresolved identity issues remain for many biracial children.

Background Information
Krystal is a 10th grade student. She lives with her mother, who is unmarried, and her two younger brothers. She is a biracial student.

In her freshman year, Krystal earned 6 of a possible 8 credits, failing Tech Ed and Algebra I. Attendance was something of an issue during 9th grade; she missed, on average, 4 – 6 school days a month and seldom did make up work. Krystal was in Merit level classes and expressed her intention to go to college and get a degree in business. Krystal is bright and appealing; she reads and comprehends well and participates actively and positively in class.

Current Situation
In the current school year, Krystal’s attendance has declined significantly. Her grades have suffered as well and her behavior – which had never been an issue – has become erratic. She is argumentative and confrontational to both peers and adults. Attempts to contact her mother by teachers, guidance, and administration have been unsuccessful.

Krystal’s English teacher has referred her to SST because, despite Krystal’s demonstrated ability and intelligence, she is underperforming and of concern as a potential dropout.

Ethnicity- Krystal is identified as being biracial

Racial/Ethnic Considerations

- Is Krystal struggling with her racial identity? Multiracial students face struggles with their racial identities and with fitting in with their schools and communities. A 2003 study in the American Journal of Public Health found that mixed race middle and high school students were more likely than their single race peers to experience trouble in school, such as repeating a grade, skipping school, being suspended, smoking, drinking, engaging in sexual activity or suffering depression.

- What racial designation does Krystal feel most appropriately conveys her heritage? The way in which students identify their own race has a bigger impact on their grades than their actual ancestry. The students’ academic achievement tends to mirror that of the racial group to which they feel the closest.
Home life considerations

- What role does Krystal have in the family? Is she taking on the mother role? Students who are forced to take on adult roles have issues being able to abandon that role in their interactions with adults and peers. This can manifest itself in being argumentative and confrontational.

- Is the mother even in the home? The case study says the school can’t make contact with her. If Krystal is raising herself and her siblings that could explain the frequent absences.

Culturally Responsive Interventions

- A cultural broker who understands the unique needs of biracial/multiracial students and their families needs to be part of the multidisciplinary team.

- Be sure the SST includes Krystal’s counselor and pupil personnel worker as part of the multi disciplinary team. If possible involve the CASS worker on the team too.

- The school counselor should become familiar with Poston’s stages of racial identity development, identify which stage Krystal is in and help Krystal work through the stages. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi-m0KOC/is-1-5/ai-80306027/print?tag=artBody:col1.

- Consider finding a female mentor for Krystal.
What is the purpose of the initial SST meeting?
- To review the case and provide all members a clear understanding of the student's challenge(s).
- To determine a course of action so that the problem is either eliminated or moved toward a positive resolution.
- To lay a foundation for continuing collaboration among staff members and parents/guardians.

Steps in Conducting the SST Meeting

STEP 1: Prepare for the Team Meeting

Once a referral is received, there are several tasks the SST Chairperson must do to prepare for the initial meeting. The chairperson will review the referral information and schedule the SST meeting to include the appropriate team members. The date the referral was received must be documented and all student information on the form should be complete. Any additional information not on the form must be gathered prior to the meeting. The referring teacher or individual must be available for the meeting and can confirm that parent communication has occurred. Prior to the meeting, an important consideration is whether parents will be participating.

Key Elements When Parents Attend the SST Meeting

- Consider the need for pre-conferencing with parents in order to enable them to participate more fully in the deliberations.
- Provide appropriate greetings upon their entrance into the school.
- Provide parents/guardians the opportunity to talk with staff prior to the meeting to build rapport and establish collaborative relationships.

Key Elements When Parents DO NOT Attend the SST Meeting

- Designate the appropriate Student Services Team member to:
  o Communicate the results of the meeting to the parent/guardian.
  o Solicit questions and concerns from the parents concerning the status of their child and subsequent actions to be taken.
  o Encourage their future participation in meetings concerning their child.

STEP 2: Start the Team Meeting

Effective leadership of the Student Services Team deliberations is critical. It is the responsibility of the SST Chairperson to ensure focused discussions, appropriate decision-making strategies and efficient use of time. Focusing on the following prerequisite questions will enhance a successful initiation of SST meetings:
Do team members understand the SST process works and their respective roles and responsibilities?
Is the meeting occurring in a space where confidential information cannot be overheard?
Is there a recorder for committee deliberations?
Is there a need for an interpreter for individuals who are deaf or who speak another language?
Is there a need for a cultural broker to attend the meeting? Consider contacting the Office of Education That is Multicultural (ETM) for guidance.

The initial activity of the meeting is to ensure that all team members are familiar with the names and roles of other individuals within the group and the purpose of the team meeting. The SST Chairperson should then focus on the following considerations:

- Stress the confidential nature of the meeting.
- Follow the SST referral form.
- Outline what decisions will be made and how the team will come to those decisions.
- Stress the desirability of participation by all team members.
- Keep people on task (during meeting).
- Keep time/schedule in mind (during meeting).

**STEP 3: Review the Case**

The core of the SST meeting is the discussion of the information available on the individual student and the subsequent decision-making. There are two aspects to the review of the case. These include a review of demographic and historical information and reviewing the presenting problem.

- Focus on the aspects of the child's life which may be related to the specific learning and/or behavioral problems identified.
- Conduct a concise examination of the student's classroom performance, disciplinary history, grades, attendance and retention history.
- Consider factors beyond the school setting (e.g., family setting, cultural considerations, SES) to the extent that they might have direct implications to current presenting problems.

**STEP 4: Determine the Action Plan**

Once the presenting problem has been clarified, the team must decide on a culturally responsive plan of action. This course of action should be clearly documented in the meeting notes, which will be retained by the SST Chairperson or designee. Electronic or paper documentation should be organized and maintained by the SST Chairperson within the school systematically and easily accessed for future reference.
**STEP 5: Conclude the Meeting**

A successful meeting warrants a successful conclusion. To be sure that this occurs, the team leader should focus on the following procedural aspects:

- Ask for final thoughts, comments, and questions.
- Summarize the decisions made (see form #3 in the Appendix).
- Evaluate the meeting in terms of which objectives were or were not attained.
- Discuss the need for a follow-up meeting and establish a schedule.
Follow-Up SST Planning Meeting

Following the development of SST interventions it is imperative to effectively plan for the subsequent or ‘Follow-Up” meeting. The Follow-Up meeting should represent a forum that effectively reviews the recommendations of previous interventions, determines the effectiveness of current interventions and presents future recommendations or strategies.

**Suggested Steps in Planning the Follow-Up Meeting:**

- Establish the goal of follow-up meeting
- Determine who will gather the data or monitor student
- Determine what assessment tools will be utilized to measure data
- Determine participants required at the subsequent meeting
- Decide who will notify parents of meeting results and plan for subsequent meeting
- Establish a meeting date
- Assign individual to contact participants prior to follow-up meeting

**Suggested Steps in Conducting Follow-Up SST Meeting**

Following the initial SST meeting, the team will convene to collectively determine whether to proceed with, revise or conclude the identified interventions. The SST intervention data, as well as other relevant information, will be considered in determining the effectiveness of the interventions.

- Present progress report/s
- Invite participants to share new information regarding the student
- Discuss the implementation of the SST interventions
- Review SST intervention data
- Discuss any environmental changes that may have impacted student’s academic/behavioral performance or skewed data
- Determine the need for further assessment, observation, and/or data
- Determine if further accommodations are needed
- Establish team consensus to the direction of subsequent interventions or referrals
- Options to consider (See definition of terms on page 21)
  - Close Case
  - Continue the SST Process
  - Refer for Comprehensive Screening
- Summarize meeting deliberations, decision, and future intervention plans
- Assign individual to contact parent and share intervention plan
- Close meeting
| **Close Case with appropriate monitoring** | If the student's response to SST interventions has been positive then the case can be closed. The classroom teacher will either continue or discontinue the SST intervention strategies. Student progress should be periodically reviewed. Information regarding these reviews should be facilitated and maintained by the SST chairperson. |
| **Continue the SST Process** | The team should focus on necessary SST revisions. Student progress and any new information must be taken into consideration in this process. A time frame should be established and an additional follow-up SST meeting should be scheduled. |
| **Consider Comprehensive Screening** | If the SST interventions prove ineffective when implemented over time and with fidelity, then consideration should be given to referring the child for a comprehensive screening. At this time, a specific disability may be suspected, but only after a comprehensive evaluation can such a disability be identified. |
FOLLOW-UP PLANNING MEETING

Following the identification of SST interventions, it is imperative to effectively plan for the subsequent or “Follow-Up” SST meeting. The Follow-Up meeting should represent a forum that effectively reviews the recommendations of previous interventions, determines the effectiveness of current interventions and presents future recommendations or strategies.

Suggested steps in **planning** the Follow-Up meeting:

- Establish the goal of the Follow-Up meeting.
- Determine who will gather the data or monitor the student.
- Determine what assessment tools will be utilized to measure data.
- Determine participants required at the subsequent meeting.
- Determine who will notify parent of the meeting result and subsequent meeting.
- Establish a meeting date.
- Assign an individual to contact participants prior to Follow-Up meeting.

CONDUCTING A FOLLOW-UP MEETING

Following the implementation of SST interventions, the team will convene to collectively determine whether to proceed or conclude the SST process. The SST intervention data, as well as other relevant information, will be considered in determining the effectiveness of the interventions.

Suggested steps in **convening** the Follow-Up meeting:

- Present progress report(s).
- Invite participants to share new information regarding the student.
- Discuss the implementation of the SST interventions.
- Review SST intervention data.
- Discuss any environmental changes that may have impacted student’s academic/behavioral performance or impacted data.
- Determine the need for further assessment, observation, and/or data.
- Determine if further accommodations are indicated.
- The team will come to a consensus regarding the direction of subsequent interventions or referrals. Explore options.
- Close case with monitoring.
- Continue the SST process.
- Consider comprehensive screening.
- Summarize meeting deliberations, statement of the decision, and future intervention plans.
- Assign an individual to contact parent and share intervention plan.
- Close meeting.
As outlined in the Maryland State Department of Education’s Response to Intervention (RTI) Framework (2008), response to intervention represents a systematic school-wide multi-tiered approach that when implemented with fidelity fosters prevention of achievement and behavioral difficulties while providing interventions at increasing levels of intensity matched to the academic and behavioral needs of students. This includes frequent monitoring of instruction and student progress in order to make decisions regarding changes in instructional goals and examining student response to instructional interventions. RTI is a well integrated system of instruction and intervention that is guided by student performance data.

This process includes decision-making teams (SSTs) that use a problem-solving method and frequent formative assessments to inform the selection of appropriate instructional interventions that improve learning outcomes for all students. The most important purpose of SST intervention meetings at the initial stage is to develop culturally responsive, evidenced based, curricular, instructional, and/or behavioral strategies that can be used in the general education classroom.

**Basic Features of RTI**

- Universal screening for academics and behavior
- Research-based, high quality instruction in the general education classroom
- Fidelity of instruction
- Student progress monitoring
- Problem solving/decision-making practices
- Tiered levels of implementation of high-quality instruction/intervention
- Research-based interventions implemented and/or modified for student problems
- Assessment of the process to ensure fidelity of both the instruction and the intervention(s).
- Family involvement
- Considerations for English Language Learners


**Benefits of the RTI Model**

- Use of a problem-solving approach to identify academic problems and the need for early intervention.
- Collaboration and shared responsibility between colleagues and related service providers.

**Factors to Consider When Developing Interventions**

- For culturally and linguistically diverse students, the team needs to complete and review the Checklist for Culturally Responsive Practices to determine the role of cultural impact on academic and behavioral performance and to plan for culturally responsive interventions.
- Appropriate academic and behavioral interventions are implemented based on student needs.
• Unintended consequences which may result from implemented interventions may occur. (i.e., time away from classroom instruction and peers, maintenance of the fidelity of intervention programs, impact on student workload, etc.)
Currently, FCPS utilizes a four-tiered intervention model. Student progress is closely monitored in each tier, and interventions are revised based on student needs. These tiers are outlined below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier 1</td>
<td>Includes high-quality instruction, curriculum based assessment, and differentiated instruction in the general education classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 2</td>
<td>Includes multidisciplinary teams discussing students not meeting enrolled grade level standards. Student needs are identified and addressed through an Individualized Learning Plan (ILP). Curriculum-based formative and summative assessment, collaborative problem solving, research-based instruction, and ongoing assessment of interventions are a part of this tier's process within the general education classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 3</td>
<td>Includes a multidisciplinary team approach that implements, monitors and, if necessary, makes revisions to the ILP. These may include more intensive interventions in the general education setting. Tier 3 interventions are generally implemented for a period of 18 weeks or more, based on student progress and needs. At Tier 3, intervention fidelity and student progress are closely monitored.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier 4</td>
<td>Includes interventions designed for students not responding to Tiers 1, 2 and 3. Interventions are delivered individually, or in small groups, through Special Education. These interventions are implemented to support the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP), and student progress is closely monitored. Tier 4 interventions are research-based and implementation must follow fidelity guidelines.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Glossary of Terms

Culture- A set of learned behaviors, traditions, beliefs, and a way of life created by a people. Elements of culture include: values and beliefs, communication patterns, social relationships, diet and food preparation, dress and other body decorations, religion, religious practices, family structure, traditions and customs, view of time and recreation and leisure.

Culture broker- Someone who is familiar with the culture of culturally and or linguistically diverse students and has experience working with members of the culture. This individual is able to function bi-culturally (See FAQ for more details).

Cultural Competence-the ability to work effectively across cultures in a way that acknowledges and respects the culture of the person being served.

Culturally and Linguistically diverse students- African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Native American, ELL students and students from low socio economic backgrounds.

Culturally responsive teaching- Teaching approach includes students’ cultural references in all aspects of instruction. It uses students’ identities and backgrounds as a valuable resource to inform instruction and it sends the message to they are respected and expected to success. Linking children’s cultures with classroom instruction maximizes student’s knowledge, skills, and attitudes while at the same time empowers students intellectually, emotionally and socially.

Disproportionality- the over representation or under-representation of a particular population or demographic group in special or gifted education programs relative to the presence of the group in the overall student population.

Note: It is critical that all users of this guide have a shared understanding of salient terms embedded in the guide. The purpose of this glossary is to ensure all users are aware of the operational definitions for the terms as they are used in the guide.
Frequently Asked Questions

How are culturally responsive Student Services Teams different from the current model we are already using in our school?

Explicit focus on the role culture plays is a necessary strategy to effectively address the persistent issue of disproportionality for culturally and linguistically diverse students. Culturally responsive Student Services Teams discuss the impact of culture on student achievement and/or behavior. Culturally responsive practices and strategies go beyond cultural sensitivity. Culturally responsive Student Services Teams engage in a process where professionals actively attempt to understand the worldview of those students who are culturally or linguistically different. They work to develop culturally relevant and sensitive, intervention strategies to be implemented in the classroom.

For FCPS culturally and linguistically diverse student groups include (but are not limited to) African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, Native American, ELL students and students from low socio economic backgrounds.

What are the characteristics of culturally responsive Student Services Team members?

Culturally responsive Student Services Team members share a common understanding of the necessity to understand the culture of the students for whom they are making recommendations. Members also recognize the importance of understanding their need to be aware of their own personal assumptions about, values, biases, and pre-conceived notions related to culturally and linguistically diverse students. Members of culturally responsive Student Services Team share a common belief that all culturally and linguistically diverse students can excel in academics when their culture, language, heritage, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate their learning.

Who are culture brokers and what role do they play in culturally responsive Student Services Teams? When do cultural brokers need to be at the table?

Cultural brokers are people who have experiences working with students from the cultural group. Culture brokers understand the written and spoken language of a particular cultural group as well as the cultural tendencies of the group.

A cultural broker needs to be involved whenever the team is discussing a culturally or linguistically diverse student. Cultural brokers know how to build bridges and establish linkages across cultures that facilitate the instructional process. This individual is able to function bi-culturally.

People who can serve in the role of cultural broker could include, but are not limited to: community liaisons, guidance counselor, school staff member who is a member of the particular cultural group, a community member, PPW, CASS worker, school psychologist, ETM office personnel or parent/guardian.
Self-Assessment Checklist for Culturally Responsive Practices

**Directions:** Read each of the statements and rate yourself. This reflective assessment will help you think about the areas where you are very capable and where you need improvement, and will help you set learning goals. This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. It is merely a tool to help you grow relative to utilizing culturally responsive practices.

**Self-Rating Scale:** D= Developing, M= Meeting, E= Exceeding
Please indicate a D, M, or E for each item below.

**Self-Assessment on Classroom Environment**

- Do your classroom environment, curriculum, instruction and disciplinary practices reflect the culture of the students you work with?

- Does your classroom incorporate multiple perspectives and materials that provide alternative explanations and worldviews?

- Do you feel comfortable facilitating conversations in your classroom about your students’ home, family, and community culture?

- Do you find ample opportunities to bring your students’ home, family, and community cultures into the classroom, including the use of cultural traditions, community history, music, art, language, and literature?

- Do the units, lessons, and/or activities you do with your students illustrate the connections among and between diverse groups in this country?

**Self-Assessment on Culture, Self, and Systems**

- Do you feel comfortable sharing your cultural heritage/background with your students?

- Do you understand power dynamics with regard to race, culture and ethnicity?

- Do you understand how personal assumptions and biases work?

- Do you understand the role that culture plays in our society?

- Do you believe that you can negotiate cultural differences?

- Do you strive to be culturally responsive to your students and in your classroom?

Adapted from Classroom to Community and Back, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon.
Self-Assessment on Student, Family and Community Engagement and Connections

☐ Do you know the cultural backgrounds of your students?

☐ Do you know the norms and values of the cultures of your students and their families?

☐ Can you identify the cultural strengths, supports, and barrios of each of your students?

☐ Do you feel comfortable bringing your students’ home, family, and community culture into the classroom teaching practices and curriculum?

☐ Do your lessons, activities, and learning materials help your students to better understand and negotiate cultural differences?

☐ Do your lessons foster an abundance of meaningful relationships among and between people (i.e. yourself, students, parents, community members, other teachers)

☐ Do your lessons foster an abundance of meaningful relationship among and between systems (i.e. the student/family and the school, the school and the community, the family and the community)

☐ Have you found ways to connect your classroom lessons and activities to larger school, district, or community initiatives that are related to culture and cultural competence?

Adapted from Classroom to Community and Back, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon.
**Resources**

**Books**


**Journals**

*Addressing The Over-representation of African American Students In Special Education, The Pre referral Intervention Process- An Administrator’s Guide*, National Alliance of Black School Educators, 2002 (see website below)

*Truth In Labeling Disproportionality In Special Education*, National Education Association, Library of Congress, NEA Professional Library, 2007 (see website below)

**Web Resources**

National Education Association – [www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

National Alliance of Black School Educators [www.nabse.org](http://www.nabse.org)

National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems [www.ncrest.org](http://www.ncrest.org)

National Association for Multicultural Education- [www.name.org](http://www.name.org)

Alliance Project: [http://www.alliance2k.org/](http://www.alliance2k.org/)
BUENO Center for Multicultural Education at University of Colorado, Boulder:
http://www.colorado.edu/education/BUENO/

Center for Inclusive Childcare
http://www.inclusivechildcare.org/

Cooperative Learning, Values, and Culturally Plural Classrooms
http://www.co-operation.org/

Cultural Competence Resources Homepage:
http://ceep.air.org/

Culturally Responsive Teaching
http://www.intime.uni.edu/

Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund, Inc.:
http://www.dredf.org/

Diversity in Early Childhood Education & Training:
http://www.decret.org/

Diversity Training University International (DTUI):
http://www.diversityuintl.com/

Education World:
http://www.educationworld.com/

Global Issues-Links:
http://www.global-issues.org

Guidelines for Cultural Respect
http://www.nativescience.org/

Illinois Association for Multilingual Multicultural Education (IAMME):
http://www.iامme.org/

Implicit Association Test:
http://implicit.harvard.edu/

International Society for Intercultural Education, Training and Research:
http://www.sietar.org

Multicultural Pavilion:
http://www.edchange.org/multicultural/
National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME):  
http://www.nameorg.org/

National Dropout Prevention Center for Students with Disabilities  
http://www.ndpc-sd.org/

National Multicultural Institute:  
http://www.nmci.org

New England Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network  
http://attc-ne.org/cultural/index.html

Public Schools of North Carolina – Raising Achievement and Closing Gaps  
http://www.ncpublicschools.org/racg/services/

Tolerance (Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center):  
http://www.tolerance.org

**Videos**


