

A PRINCIPAL'S JOURNEY

IN CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP

What is culturally responsive teaching?

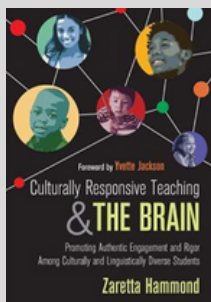
Teaching practices that attend to the specific cultural characteristics of each student as an individual.

These cultural characteristics include values, traditions, language, communication, learning styles, and relationship norms (Rychly & Graves, 2012).

How can I learn more about culturally responsive teaching?

- Sign up to take part in the Culturally Responsive Leader micro-credential through Bloomboard.
- Attend one of the #TeachArkansas Lecture Series Events around the state (<https://bit.ly/2s1mb5q>).
- Attend the Arkansas Department of Education summer conference, *The Summit*, during the summer of 2019 to hear from Principal El (@Principal_EL).
- Visit with APPEL teachers who are piloting a culturally responsive micro-credential co-written by an Arkansas Teacher of the Year.

Read *Culturally Responsive Teaching and the Brain* by Zaretta Hammond to learn more.



One Arkansas principal took her Culturally Responsive Leadership training to a new level. She took the training to heart, and now her life, her family, her building, and her students have been forever changed.

Two Questions Changed Everything

During the first training for the Culturally Responsive Leadership micro-credential, attendees were asked two questions. First, **do you know your own culture?** Leaders were challenged to dig deeply into their heritage, traditions, and previous life experiences prior to looking into the culture of their students. **Where are your students from?**

Principals were asked to think about what countries were represented in their school. After hearing these two questions, this principal left knowing she couldn't answer either. That's when her journey began.

A Journey with DNA

In order to discover her heritage and culture, the principal took a DNA test. Once she received the results, she found out that her father, who left when she was a baby, had passed away recently. This knowledge allowed her to make contact with her uncle, who told her the family had been looking for her. She found out she had a sister she never knew. Through conversations, the principal learned about her family and her heritage. The process of learning her own heritage led her to deep reflection. The principal realized that living with a single mother, who struggled to make ends meet, was instrumental in making her the leader she is today. This experience reminded her that her students and their families were also on a journey, and she could help them on their way.

All Students Have a Story

The principal began to learn more about the students in her building and that there were nine countries represented. She began researching each country, finding facts, maps, languages, traditions, and more. Teachers began receiving culturally responsive training as part of their school improvement plan. Teachers realized that some of their classroom procedures or engaging activities went against the beliefs of some students. Soon after, teachers were inspired and decided to plan a Culture Day so students could travel from room to room, or "country to country" to experience the cultures of their classmates. This work towards "knowing where your students are from" has changed how teachers, staff, and administrators engage students and their families.