MICROMESSAGING
to Reach and Teach Every Student™

Topic   **Impact of Culture and Family**

Unit   **Influence of Culture**

Culture is defined as the shared patterns of behaviors and interactions, cognitive constructs, and affective understanding that are learned through a process of socialization. These shared patterns identify the members of a culture group while also distinguishing those of another group. (CARLA, University of Minnesota, 2013)

Introduction

The cultural and family environments in which students are raised impact their participation and experience in education. For example, students may come from families with an individualistic culture, and others may come from families with a collectivist culture. These differences may cause teachers to inaccurately judge students' behavior, mannerisms, and abilities because their cultural background is different from their own. Cultural capital represents the different knowledge and skills that are valued in mainstream society that give some people advantages over those with less cultural capital. Education research has found that cultural capital has an impact on grades and educators' interactions with students. Education research has also found that roles of parents and families in the educational success of students differ depending on their cultural background. For example, families with low socio-economic resources often lack the human and material resources to create a positive academic environment at home but may provide equally important positive environments through extensive support networks and encouragement for academic success.

Illustrations and Examples

Palmer et al. (2011) studied the influence of family on the academic success of African American males at historically Black colleges and universities. One participant, Douglass, articulated the influence of his family's culture and the motivational impact of his mother's encouragement: "My mother is a very strong woman. There are seven of us in our family. My father died when I was young, so she raised all of us by herself. So every time I needed help with something, she [might not have] knew about the work, but it's…the advice she gave me, and it motivated me to [succeed]." Douglass demonstrates that family culture may not provide the formal support in terms of material or financial educational resources, but he received a motivational support from his mother that led to his academic success.

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Successful Research-based Strategies

- Involve, invite, and include parents in discussions, taking into account the many ways of communicating and the barriers that parents in poverty face to Internet access, transportation, and taking off from work.
- Involve like-minded peers in programs to foster a sense of belonging in the academic community.
- Practice positive naming—help the student identify someone in his or her life who recognizes the students' potential, connects the student's strengths to characteristics of a profession, and teaches him or her how to enter that field.
- Be diverse in the examples used in the classroom to illustrate concepts, ideas, and models.
- Inventory family concerns, perspectives, and ideas. Plan a series of activities/interactions based on the survey findings.
- Assign a family liaison.
- Gather family ideas for integrating the culture of the community into curriculum and activities:

References and Bibliography

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