

# T-CARE

## Teachers Connecting to Advance Retention and Empowerment

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CTL@CSUN IS THE RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT HUB OF THE MICHAEL D. EISNER COLLEGE OF EDUCATION.

Founded in 2002 through the Eisner Foundation, our mission is to identify, research, and disseminate what really works in education.



Another year, another 23 cents! Welcome back to school. Since a major goal of this national newsletter is to help educators avoid burnout and stay motivated, we want to start the school year off by thinking about making your lives easier. It is so easy for busy teachers to get bogged down in planning, pulling materials together, grading, calling parents, and working in committees. So, what can you do to not find yourselves down that same path over and over again?

I strongly suggest you take a minute (ok, 30 minutes) and create a week-long schedule for yourself. Some of you might be thinking "I don't have time for that" or "Every week is different," but that's the problem. Create a schedule that includes when you are going to eat, sleep, watch TV, grade papers, exercise, have date night, and play with your kids. What this will do for you is multifold. First, it will help you structure your own time. Second, it will reduce the guilt some of you feel when you don't "do it all." Lay your burden down and do what you can in the time you have. Allow yourself to be human. Third, seeing things like movies, exercise, and sleep on your calendar help "make you" find balance. I mean, geez, if Netflix is scheduled for two hours on Saturday morning, who are you to second guess your calendar?

Another tip for the beginning of the year is to let technology work for you. Get yourself a cloud system. Not sure what I mean? Ask a student or a 20-something teacher. You want to have a place where you can put every single document you create so that you can keep track or access those materials whether you are at home, at school, or at Starbucks. Include a file with student data such as phone numbers, schedules, family contact information, test scores, and learning profiles. This way, when you are on the way home Friday afternoon and you realize you need to call a parent or you are going to work on a project and need student information, you won't have to waste precious TGIF time by turning around and heading back to school to get that piece of paper. Take frequent pictures on your smart phone of your work so you can access it whenever you need it.

I remind you once again that you deserve a balanced life. Students deserve 100% during your work time, but a burned out teacher doesn't do them any good. Keep yourself fresh and stay relentlessly positive.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Wendy W. Murawski".

Wendy W. Murawski, Ph.D.  
Executive Director and Eisner Endowed Chair  
Center for Teaching & Learning, CSUN



# WHAT REALLY WORKS

## WORKING WITH MULTI-RACIAL STUDENTS

Multiracial individuals make up about 2% of the population in the United States. For the 2010 United States Census, approximately 42% of the multiracial population was under the age of 18, making these individuals the fastest growing minority group among American youth. This means that as teachers and counselors working in K-12 schools, you are highly likely to have students fitting into this demographic. While the idea of multiracial individuals is not new, the population growth is a reminder of the variability in our student populations and the importance of including the multiracial voice, experiences, and history in our classrooms. It is also important for teachers to understand that multiracial students may face unique challenges at school such as microaggressions, prejudice, rejection, or not fitting in to social groups. There can also be a lack of acknowledgement or acceptance of mixed race heritage from peers and teachers—whether intended or not.

Outside of family, schools are one of the most important socializing agents of children and adolescents. Our job as K-12 educators goes far beyond the content we are required to teach. A teacher's reach can be deeply personal and promote positive growth and increase the self-esteem of students. Oftentimes teachers and counselors may not be aware of the impact they can have on the racial and ethnic identity development of their students. Effectively addressing issues of race and ethnicity in the classroom can be tricky, especially when students come from myriad backgrounds. How can a teacher consciously integrate inclusive curriculum related to race and ethnicity and facilitate critical conversations for academic achievement as well as personal growth?

A vital component of a teacher's ability to support multiracial students begins with the teacher's ability to examine his or her own personal thoughts, values, beliefs, and understanding about race, racial issues, and racial identity. Then, as faculty, it is essential to examine the racial climate within the school and to work to enhance teacher sensitivity to racial and multiracial issues via faculty trainings, facilitated discussion among faculty members, and open forums with faculty and parents, if possible. As educators become more

personally racially self-aware, learn to engage with their own peers regarding these topics, and accept that race does matter for them and their colleagues, they will then be able to engage with students regarding race and racial topics.

In the classroom across all grade levels, teachers can invite students to integrate the topics of race and ethnicity, to open conversations among students about similarities and differences between various racial and ethnic groups, including multiracial individuals. Students should be encouraged to relate what they are learning in class to their own life, identity, and family history. Assignments should welcome students to select books, stories, or reports about their own racial or ethnic groups. Additionally, teachers can utilize notable multiracial figures (think Barack Obama, for example), books, clay and crayons, activities, and images that represent multicultural groups and multiracial individuals for their lessons. With older children, teachers can encourage their students to integrate, acknowledge, and discuss racial and multiracial topics and issues by drawing on the students' personal experiences or utilizing current social events as discussion prompts. Creating safe spaces for these discussions at school is increasingly more important, as the racial climate and social issues surrounding race in the United States are in flux. When topics arise among students regarding race and racial issues (i.e. microaggressions, prejudice, acceptance, etc.), teachers should be confident to encourage open and direct dialogue.

At the institutional level, schools can promote and support inclusive environments for multiracial individuals by supporting and/or promoting multiracial support groups and/or student organizations. Many multiracial students desire to belong to an organization like the Black Student Union or Asian American Student Union, but feel they must leave out part of their racial/ethnic identity or that they do not completely fit in. Multiracial clubs or supportive organizations can provide much needed support to these students as well as opportunities for programming and discussions about the unique experiences of multiracial individuals. It is all about finding out what works for all...yes, all...of our students!



**Dana Stone, Ph.D., LMFT**, is an Assistant Professor in the Marriage and Family Therapy program at California State University, Northridge. She has been researching and writing about the multiracial population all while teaching graduate students for over 10 years.

## WHAT REALLY WORKS

### UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING: FLEXIBLE PLANNING FOR ALL

Walk into any classroom and what do you see? Different genders, colors, heights, abilities, clothes, and different... well, everything. Teachers today work with the most diverse set of students we have ever experienced. This is exciting! As a citizenry, we have made the choice to teach everyone—no matter what.

To highlight this, think about all of your current students; they have special needs in learning, cognition, physicality, emotions, health, sexual orientation, second language learning, technology and on, and on, and on. Additionally, in some places, physical classrooms are a thing of the past and are rapidly becoming virtual educational experiences. So how do educators even begin to address all of these situational elements in the daily design of their class instruction?

UDL is a set of principles and techniques for creating inclusive classroom instruction and accessible course materials. At its core is the assertion that all students benefit when they are given multiples ways to take in new information, express their comprehension, and become engaged in learning. Therefore, UDL minimizes barriers and maximizes learning for all students. That certainly sounds like a good plan, doesn't it?

Flexible planning for all! We have to keep emphasizing that there is no one kind of learning! Learning differs across tasks, development, and individuals, so UDL is a way for us to reach our students through representation, action and expression, and engagement. You can read more about those categories at [cast.org](http://cast.org); but for right now, just think of those words as meaning 'before,' 'during,' and 'after' instruction.

#### Proactive Nature of UDL.

UDL means making things accessible before they occur, rather than adapting them afterwards. For example, a third grade general education teacher must take into account that his or her class of 30 students with mixed ethnicities, several of whom have disabilities, as well as a variety of levels of English learning, is not going to require the identical planning as his colleague's class across the country with 22 students of all one ethnicity and one language background. Planning proactively is a necessity.

Incorporating UDL into your classroom planning, instruction, and assessment can make all the difference in the world. Adopting a UDL frame-of-mind means recognizing that we all learn differently, and that we can use those differences to enhance instruction, rather than hinder it. Why not minimize barriers and maximize learning for everyone? That certainly sounds like a good plan, doesn't it?

#### Checklist for UDL Success

- ✓ **EXPLAIN** to your students what UDL is and why you are using it. Remember that those little minds are much more clever than we give them credit for. Students have great ideas, too!
- ✓ **OFFER** options for students to show what they've learned. Whenever possible, ask kids to work in their preferred modes (e.g., acting, dancing, multimedia). If your goal is to see if they've learned the material, then let them show you they have!
- ✓ **MAKE** learning fun and engaging. Promise right now that you will never stand in front of your class again and simply lecture in a dry monotone. Our students deserve MORE!
- ✓ **ASK**, "How can I teach the essential elements of the standards in a different way?" Teaching in the same format, using essentially the same words, day in and day out, cannot be very much fun for teachers. Ask a colleague for some ideas!
- ✓ **INSERT** variety and choice without too much work. A simple example of doing this is to stop telling your class **WHAT** they have to write about. When the content isn't the point of your lesson, allow students choice whenever possible.
- ✓ **FOCUS** on the idea that UDL is based in design elements. Educators call that "planning." **FLEXIBLE PLANNING for ALL!**

**Tamarah Ashton, Ph.D.**, has been in the field of education for over 30 years. She has taught in both special and general education. She is currently a Professor in the Department of Special Education at California State University, Northridge where she serves as the Co-Director of the intern program and the Graduate Coordinator.





## WHAT REALLY WORKS

### OPEN YOUR MIND TO A NEW OPEN HOUSE

Open House or Back-to-School Night is a fairly ubiquitous part of school culture. The typical agenda includes a quick overview of academic goals, standards, and schedules and how families can support learning at home. In some cases, the event may include behavior expectations, grading, and homework. The event is often hurried as teachers rush through a year-long plan, made even more problematic if teachers use terminology connected to statewide assessment such as standards, API, Common Core, portfolios, or scoring rubrics. All the information may be standard for teachers, but may be unique and completely confusing for many parents, especially those with limited knowledge of US schools or limited English fluency.

We can help. The Bridging Culture Project™ was launched to help teachers develop their own, meaningful ways to support families who may come from a collectivistic cultural values system. Here are two ideas that derived from that project.

#### Open House as a Family Photo Op

One teacher, Mrs. Perez, wanted to leverage her knowledge about the importance of the family for Open House. Rather than send home a school-developed notice, she had her students make personal invitations for their families to attend the Open House. Immediately, families who might otherwise feel a bit reluctant to attend a formal school event, or who might not be able to read notices from school, were personally invited by their child to attend.

Once the families were in the classroom, the teacher took a family photo with a lovely school backdrop. This was a powerful bridge in several ways. First, families felt valued and they returned home with a school photo of the whole family to put in their homes. This served as a reminder of the importance of their role in their child's education, building a sense of connection and feeling valued. Second, the photos were posted on a bulletin board inside the classroom. This was a potent visual connection for the students, reminding them that their families mattered and were included. It also marked a place where the children could gather and tell about their families in informal ways. Finally, the family photos were stored on the classroom computer and used as a

visual prompt for writing. "Even parents who did not speak English seemed to understand that the children were using their family as a source of knowledge that was appreciated by the school" (Rothstein-Fisch & Trumbull, 2008, p. 58).

#### Learning About Families

In a classroom of immigrant Latino students, Mrs. Hernandez knew that the families were often reluctant to talk during conferences. She wanted to get to know her families, but how could she get the information she was seeking in a welcoming, non-threatening manner? She devised a series of seven questions which she wrote in English and Spanish on a large sheet. Because she knew that some parents were not literate in either Spanish or English, she distributed seven sticky notes to each family and asked them to write their child's name on all the notes. Then the teacher read the following questions aloud in Spanish, one by one.

- ♦ Is this your first child in school?
- ♦ Do you have any other children at our school?
- ♦ Do you read or write in English?
- ♦ Do you read or write in Spanish?
- ♦ Is there anybody to help with English homework at home?
- ♦ Do you work outside of your home?
- ♦ Would you like to volunteer in our class?

If the answer to any of the questions was "yes," parents were requested to put their child's name under that question. For example, if this was their first child in school, the child's name would go up on the board. Families who might otherwise feel marginalized saw other families they could relate to, thus lowering the potential embarrassment about their own lack of literacy.

These are just two examples of many that Bridging Cultures teachers developed. To learn more about how teachers can support students, check out our book:

Rothstein-Fisch, C., & Trumbull, E. (2008). *Managing diverse classrooms: How to build on students' cultural strengths*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.

**Carrie Rothstein-Fisch, Ph.D.**, is a Professor of Educational Psychology and Counseling and Co-coordinator of the Master of Arts in Early Childhood Education. She has been an early childhood educator for 40 years and is a core researcher on the Bridging Cultures Project.



## ADMIN CORNER

### BE A TYPE 4 TEACHER!

From countless hours of listening to students, and my own children, I can confidently conclude that students believe there are four types of teachers defined by “like” and “respect.” The first type of teacher (Type 1) is one that students don’t like or respect; Type 2 is one that students like but don’t respect; Type 3 is one that students don’t like but respect; and Type 4 is one that students like and respect. What I can also conclude from years of observing teachers and examining corresponding student achievement data is that students perform at their best with teachers they like *and* respect.

I have heard from too many teachers over the years that “Students don’t have to like me, they just have to respect me.” To these teachers and any others that may be thinking this, I would say to think again. If you want your students to achieve at their very best (and I know you do), you better give them a reason to like you too. The assumption that students don’t need to like their teachers to learn from them is simply not true. Respect is not enough!

Countless research has concluded that student engagement is the key to student achievement. Students who are more engaged, achieve higher. If we believe this to be true (given the research we should), then how could we believe that students don’t need to like us to learn? I think you would agree that in order to engage with others we must feel safe and valued. I think you would also agree that we like others who make us feel safe and valued. If this is the case then of course students need to like their teachers to perform at their very best. If they don’t like us, they won’t engage in meaningful ways. Instead, they’ll probably engage negatively, in fact I would almost guarantee some will, but they won’t engage in ways that will yield the student achievement and healthy adult outcomes we want.

I have harped on likeability, the first component of how students define us as teachers because I believe it’s the one we’re not as good at (partially because we’ve been led to believe it wasn’t necessary) and because it can impact our ability to be respected by our students. That being

said, I don’t want to disregard the importance of respect too. Students do need to respect us as teachers and the expertise and authority we have to instill knowledge and love of learning in them. They respect us when we are true to our word—do what we say we will—and when we set high expectations for them. Students also respect consistent boundaries and structures.

Students will perform at their very best when they know that you believe in and care for them (likeability) and when you set high expectations and hold them consistently accountable for their learning (respect). It really is that simple!

Below are a few suggestions for what you can do in your class to ensure students define you as a Type 4 teacher:

- ♦ Ask their preferences (LIKE) and differentiate to meet them (RESPECT)
- ♦ Set clear expectations for learning and grading and stick to them (RESPECT)
- ♦ Establish daily, predictable learning routines and stick to them (RESPECT)
- ♦ Build relationships with your students; take time each day to get to know your students and have them get to know you (LIKE)
- ♦ Notice when your students are off and ask them why in a caring way (LIKE)
- ♦ Have students set learning goals and check in with them on their progress (RESPECT)
- ♦ Provide positive feedback on students’ progress, be encouraging (believe in them) even if they aren’t doing as well as you’d hoped (LIKE and RESPECT)
- ♦ Give students the opportunity for voice and choice in class—it shows you value and respect them (LIKE and RESPECT)
- ♦ Hold them accountable for learning and require it as an ongoing process (RESPECT)



**Kerry Callahan** is the assistant superintendent of educational services for Western Placer Unified School District in northern CA. She has been in education for 17 years and has been a math, AVID and intervention teacher, a math coordinator, and principal at both the elementary and high school level.

## THE CARING CONNECTION

### PARENT-TEACHER PARTNERSHIPS

Teachers want ALL students to succeed; isn't that why we teach? Families are a critical part of the ALL equation. Parents want their child to succeed as much as teachers do, but might not always know how to make that happen. Families may not know what or how you are teaching in certain subjects, but they do know their child best and have valuable information to share. However, family members may not know how to partner with you. Research clearly shows that when home and schools partner, student outcomes are increased exponentially.

First, and foremost, as educators, you must want to partner with parents, and believe that families want to partner with you. Understanding characteristics, interactions, functions, and life cycles of families, not just the student, will enhance the formation of these partnerships.

There are definite skills identified as the foundation of school and home partnerships that teachers and parents can implement to support each other. The seven partnership principles, and successful strategies to implement the principles, are described below:

#### Communication:

- ◆ Help parents feel comfortable and add a personal touch.
- ◆ Listen for meaning and feelings, not with just your ears but with your eyes and heart.
- ◆ Use understandable terms, not technical terms or jargon.
- ◆ Be honest and direct by not sugarcoating information. Share information in a private setting starting with strengths and ending with challenges and solution choices.
- ◆ Provide and coordinate information.

#### Professional Competence:

- ◆ Parents want teachers to have knowledge and skills to individualize educational needs and to provide supports and services.
- ◆ Set high expectations. When you provide high expectations to families, then families leave despair behind and move on to develop high expectations.

#### Respect:

- ◆ Honor cultural diversity. Be aware, and respectful, of cultural differences. Use these differences and strengths.
- ◆ Affirm student and family strengths. Find strengths in the students and family and share them every chance you get.

- ◆ Treat students and families with dignity. Suspend judgment and be right there with the families. Treat the student and family with honor, worth, and esteem.

#### Commitment:

- ◆ Go "above and beyond!" Show the family that you care. Learn about the family and the student and share what you learned with the family.
- ◆ Be available and accessible. Find out how the family communicates and what time is best for them when you need to have a conversation.
- ◆ Be sensitive to emotional needs. Connect families with other families and/or mentors, and provide resources to families.

#### Advocacy:

- ◆ Prevent problems. Be proactive. Share information or concerns as soon as you have them and be solution-focused.
- ◆ Broaden alliances. Build a team to support the child and family.
- ◆ Create win-win solutions. Ask what is going well and build on the strengths.

#### Equality:

- ◆ Share power. Families know their child best. Believe that!
- ◆ Provide choices and work toward parent empowerment.

#### Trust:

- ◆ Be reliable. Follow through with what you are asked to do or what you say you will do.
- ◆ Use sound judgment. Families will trust you if they know you are competent.
- ◆ Maintain confidentiality. Share only the information needed for education with only those who need to know.

Each principle requires skills and strategies to execute. The principles relate to each other, support each other, and the first six principles are needed for trust to develop. When trust is built, and the other principles followed, families and teachers will work well together, and meet their united goal of student success!

Adapted from: Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Erwin, E., Soodak, L., & Shogren, K. (2015). *Families, professionals, and exceptionality: Positive outcomes through partnerships and trust* (6th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Prentice Hall.



**Dr. Mary Murray** is Associate Dean in the College of Education and Human Development at Bowling Green State University. She has over 35 years of experience working with families with children with exceptionalities as a teacher, administrator, and university faculty.

**Tanya Braden** is a mother of four, 2 with special needs, and has been in the field of education for 27 years. She has served numerous roles in K-12 and higher education, and currently works with Bowling Green State University and the Ohio Department of Education.





## SELF CARE SPOTLIGHT

### Apps to Help Make Self-Care a Regular Routine

As we embark on a new school year, it's important to take a new perspective on caring for ourselves. A major challenge for teachers is finding personal time when things at school get busy. Google recently released an updated version of its **Calendar** app. Busy folks (yep, that's you!) can now let Google Calendar do the scheduling for them. This free app will find pockets of time, within parameters that you set, to schedule important out-of-school self-care activities like exercise and meal preparation.

Another free app that can save teachers time is the **Bloomz** mobile and web app. This app allows teachers to securely manage communication with families. Teachers can send updates and reminders, schedule conferences, and request donations and classroom volunteers efficiently with this app. Instead of trying to rethink the last month for your class newsletter, or make a sign-up table for the upcoming bake sale, this app will create what you need with a few pieces of key information. Imagine the time you can save after school hours to take care of you!

If you must bring work home with you, it can be difficult to stay focused with everything going on around you. **Be Focused** is a free app that will help you prioritize your daily take-home tasks. As tasks are completed, your progress is charted and short timed breaks are provided. I hope you will find these apps to be helpful in maintaining a balanced schedule so you can make time for yourself this school year.

**Janet Josephson, Ph.D.**, is an Assistant Professor of special education at Millersville University of Pennsylvania. She has nine years of teaching experience teaching music, general education, and special education in grades K-8, and two years of experience at the college level.



**Teachers Have No Time and We Know That!** ...so rather than re-creating the wheel, we're sharing 20 websites that you should know about. Each of these has lessons, resources, videos, etc. to save you time and help your students. Now all you have to do is find the time to visit the sites...!

Teachers Network [www.teachersnetwork.org](http://www.teachersnetwork.org)  
 Smithsonian Education [www.smithsonianeducation.org](http://www.smithsonianeducation.org)  
 Education World [www.educationworld.com](http://www.educationworld.com)  
 Discovery Education [www.discoveryeducation.com](http://www.discoveryeducation.com)  
 EdHelper [www.edhelper.com](http://www.edhelper.com)  
 Teacher Tube [www.teachertube.com](http://www.teachertube.com)  
 Teachers Pay Teachers [www.teacherspayteachers.com](http://www.teacherspayteachers.com)  
 Edmodo [www.edmodo.com](http://www.edmodo.com)  
 PBS Teachers [www.pbslearningmedia.org](http://www.pbslearningmedia.org)  
 Teachers Net [www.teachers.net](http://www.teachers.net)

42 Explore [www.42explore.com](http://www.42explore.com)  
 A to Z Teacher Stuff [www.atozteacherstuff.com](http://www.atozteacherstuff.com)  
 Teachers First [www.teachersfirst.com](http://www.teachersfirst.com)  
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 Class DoJo [www.classdojo.com](http://www.classdojo.com)  
 NASA [www.nasa.gov](http://www.nasa.gov)  
 Donors Choose [www.donorschoose.org](http://www.donorschoose.org)  
 Common Core Standards Initiative [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org)





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Michael D. Eisner College of Education  
California State University, Northridge  
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