



The Center for Teaching and Learning at the Michael D. Eisner College of Education

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CTL on the Cutting Edge

Bridging Cultures

Research Questions

What is it about culture and education? How does the home culture of Latino immigrant students differ from the “mainstream” culture of U.S. schools? Why is it important for teachers to understand the differences? How can educators take advantage of students’ cultural traits to improve classroom management, student performance, and school-parent relations? CTL Fellow Dr. Carrie Rothstein-Fisch is one of the founding members of the **Bridging Cultures Project** and co-author of Managing Diverse Classrooms in addition to other publications.

The Project

Drawing on theory and empirical studies, the **Bridging Cultures Project** was developed as a longitudinal action research study of elementary school teachers with large numbers of immigrant students. The framework for understanding cultural differences, comparing the “individualistic” culture that prevails in American culture with the “collectivistic” culture that characterizes most of the world’s population, including many of the Latino immigrant students proved immensely valuable. Almost immediately, the framework prompted the teachers to implement strategies that capitalize on the cultural values that these students and their families offer, such as an emphasis on helping, sharing, and the success of the group. The collective wisdom of teachers in the Bridging Cultures Project includes their modified classroom practices resulting in:

- Motivation and rewards
- Learning in the content areas
- Assessment and grading
- Homework and attendance
- Classroom rules
- Communication with families including Open House and conferences

What’s Next?

Two workshops have already been sponsored by the CTL- March 11 and March 26, 2008. Look for information on upcoming seminars for the opportunity to explore this research based framework. It is our hope that faculty from all departments in the College of Education will participate in this project, experiment with incorporating these concepts in their courses, and share their experiences.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
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