PART I

Getting Centered

This book presents culturally proficient practices through the context of professional learning. We use the term *professional learning* rather than *staff development* or *professional development* because we intend to broaden the conversation beyond inservice or formal training to include all professional learning experiences in which educators engage. These experiences include, but are not limited to, assessment and inquiry-driven planning, instructional design and strategies, curriculum development, coaching, leadership development, shared decision making, and culturally proficient collaborative educational practices.

In this book, we intentionally created a focus on learning communities where all members, including students, teachers, parents, administrators, classified and certificated staff, school community members, and school partners actively create a sense of collaborative curiosity that probes deeper, long-term self-commitments and collaborative commitments to learning. This collaborative curiosity is key to developing both support and actions that result in the confrontation of inequities in schools. The intended results of actively confronting these inequities through collaborative curiosity are higher performance and growth for each and every community member.

Part I: Getting Centered is composed of Chapters 1 through 3. These chapters ground the reader in the Tools for Culturally Proficient Educational Practices as well as the history of reform and

equity in North American schools. For first time readers on Cultural Proficiency, Chapter 1 serves as an introduction to the concept of Cultural Proficiency and to the Tools for Cultural Proficiency. For readers already familiar with Cultural Proficiency (Lindsey, Nuri Robins, & Terrell, 2003; Nuri Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2006; Lindsey, Martinez, & Lindsey, 2007), this chapter can serve as a review and renewal of the approach and four tools. Chapter 1 presents a frame for integrating the Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency with the tenets of professional learning communities.

Chapter 2 traces the evolutionary nature of equity issues in our democratic societies, such as PK–12 schools and other public institutions of learning. You will read about significant events and mandates that have shaped the policies and practices of our schools and that either facilitate or inhibit student learning. Having an understanding of our history of equity and inequity is an important step in learning how to become a culturally proficient learning community.

Chapter 3 focuses on the definitions, descriptions, and varieties of professional learning communities. We summarize and categorize various researchers' perspectives of and experiences with learning communities. Within the current context of emphasis on learning communities, we examine the opportunities and limitations of the learning community perspective with regard to demographic groups, equity, access, and diversity using the lens of Cultural Proficiency.

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Getting Centered

The Tools of Cultural Proficiency

Most people I meet want to develop more harmonious and satisfying relationships—in their organizations, communities, and personal lives. But we may not realize that this desire can only be satisfied by partnering with new and strange allies—curiosity and disturbance.

—Margaret Wheatley, 2001, p. 1

Getting Centered

Margaret Wheatley (2001) invites us, as educators, to give up our certainties and rely on each other to find our way to new discoveries and learning. She challenges us to recognize that we cannot accomplish our learning goals alone. We need each other. In today's complex educational environments, more than ever before, we need each other. In response to this need, many educators have developed communities of practice and learning communities. Educational learning communities are inclusive of teachers, school administrators, and school partners, and they come together with a deep commitment to their professionalism and a profound clarity about the purpose of their work through continuous study, reflection, dialogue, and learning

(Hord & Sommers, 2008). Take a few minutes to reflect on your current role as a teacher, school administrator, counselor, professional learning specialist, or a partner of the school community.

As you think about your role(s), what is your reaction to Wheatley's quote? In what ways might a community of learners help you achieve your professional goals? In your current community, who might benefit from your contributions? What do you *get* from your community? What do you *give* to your community? Are learning communities formally identified in your current context? In which learning communities are you engaged? Use the following lines to record your thoughts or ask your questions.

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In a variety of forms, learning communities have always been part of how we work in schools. What is different now is that we are intentional in creating learning communities focused on student performance and achievement. This chapter introduces you to the intersection of the Tools of Cultural Proficiency with the characteristics of professional learning communities (PLCs). "*Culturally Proficient individuals are aware of their values and beliefs about diversity and at the same time are aware of the behaviors, policies, and practices within an organization or institution*" (Lindsey et al., 2007, p. 34). Effective members of professional learning communities are aware of the inclusive nature of their community and look for opportunities to rely on the diversity of each other to create and share their vision, mission, and collective learning. The major purpose of this chapter is to present the Tools of Cultural Proficiency as a frame for communities of learners to intentionally focus on setting and reaching academic achievement goals for students who have historically not been well served by schools.

Building a Case for Culturally Proficient Learning Communities

Learning communities, recognized by various new names, are prevalent in our schools today. Some are labeled *professional learning*

communities, some use the shortened and less formal *PLC*, and some are described as *small learning communities*. Others take on the names of grade levels or departments, such as the third grade or the science department learning communities. Simply put, these meetings may in fact foster learning conversations, but they do not represent the authentic work of learning communities. Please read the following vignettes, and while reading, be fully aware of your thoughts and reactions:

- A colleague enthused about a new instructional strategy that worked well in her classroom stops by your classroom to talk with you and share her experience. In the ensuing conversation, you learn how you might use the strategy she shared in your classroom. However, during the next month, you just can't seem to find time to implement the strategy.
- In your monthly grade-level or department meeting, as a faculty you are examining the overrepresentation of males in special education. Several of you are intrigued by the data and make a list of questions for which you will seek answers or resources. When you offer to join the assistant administrator and counselor with master-schedule building for next year, you are told in a whisper, "There just isn't enough time for the necessary meetings to support addressing your questions, and by the way, we must be sure our special education staff has its teaching assignments next year. We need these students and these students need our special teachers in this capacity."
- Students in your school make bigoted, insensitive comments to one another. You and your colleagues realize there are underlying issues that need to be addressed and want to engage in a schoolwide effort to study the issue with students, their parents, and staff in order to determine effective ways to respond to students and each other.
- You attend several professional development seminars or a university course to learn how to address issues of underachievement by specific demographic groups of students (e.g., African American males, girls in the sciences, English learners). The seminars and course are taught by professionals who have an instructional history of working with individuals in the same demographic group as themselves.
- Your grade-level team has decided to examine student performance data by demographic groups and agrees to focus its instructional strategies to better serve student needs.

What thoughts and feelings occurred as you read these vignettes? Take a few moments to recall your reactions. Where do you notice learning opportunities in these occurrences? Be mindful not to describe the person or the event. Only describe the learning opportunities for you as an educator or for your school. Use this space to record your thinking:

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Being in or with a learning community does not guarantee improved student achievement. Culturally proficient practices help members of the learning community examine their own values and beliefs, as well as the policies and practices of their organizations, about how we interact with our students, their families, and their community. Numerous examples and opportunities for communities are found in today's schools. Educators are invited, encouraged, and assigned to work in traditional groups or teams such as department teams, grade-level teams, faculty study groups, school leadership teams, and more recent venues such as small learning communities, houses, families, and professional learning communities.

We propose that community members be willing to closely examine their own thinking, assumptions, and behaviors will, in fact, disturb their current environments by using the *inside-out* approach for culturally proficient practices to impact and significantly change student achievement, teacher performance, administrator and parent commitments, and school community involvement and support. We suggest that opportunities for *inside-out* disturbances are immediately within our reach. The following are manifestations of these intentional, *inside-out* disturbances.

- Classrooms: Individual educators are more mindful of their own values, beliefs, and behaviors. Educators pay attention to student-to-student interactions, their interactions with fellow educators, as well as their reactions to students and colleagues. Examples include the extent to which educators recognize their gaps in cultural knowledge, their reactions to student and colleague behaviors that may be cultural in nature, and the extent to which they and fellow educators are knowledgeable about the students' neighborhoods in order to develop instructional examples familiar to students.
- Workrooms: Educators' collective values, beliefs, collective optimism and efficacy, and behaviors. Examples include the

extent to which formal and informal conversation centers on the students and their parents or guardians reflected in language that views students and parents or guardians as opportunities for educators' cultural learning as opposed to using language that views students and parents or guardians as being the source of problems.

- Leadership Meetings: Administrators' and teacher leaders' demonstrated values, beliefs, and behaviors. Examples include the manner in which culture, both in terms of the school's organizational culture as well as the students' culture, is a normal component of regular meetings, including professional development meetings.
- Boardrooms: Organizational policies and practices. Ongoing examination of district and school-site policies and practices, involving all stakeholders, to insure that district and school site policies are responsive to the needs of the diversity of the community. This oversight is particularly important for schools and districts undergoing demographic shifts. Often, shifts in student demographic populations will create emergent, new adult responses that were invisible prior to the enrollment changes. It is incumbent on policymakers to demonstrate decision-making practices that align resources and services with emergent community demographics and student needs.

Each of the illustrations above represents a unique, yet familiar, context for examining and understanding ourselves as individual educators and as members of highly complex schools and school districts. Topics of equity, diversity, and access have historical contexts that are important in order for us to know and understand the value of culturally proficient practices. Chapter 2 provides you with a context for understanding the manner in which educational equity has been an unfolding reality in our organizational democracies. In the section that follows, we describe the Tools of Cultural Proficiency so that when you read Chapter 2 the rationale for culturally proficient practices in our schools is readily apparent.

Cultural Proficiency Is About Intention

Cross (1989) describes Cultural Proficiency as an *inside-out* process of personal and organizational change. Cultural Proficiency is a lens through which we frame our personal and organizational learning and develop principles to guide our personal behaviors and organizational policies and practices. As an intentional *inside-out* process,

Cultural Proficiency provides us with the opportunity to become students of our own assumptions about self, others, and the context in which we work with others. When our context is the school or a unit within a school—grade level or department—we have the opportunity to examine assumptions that have become institutionalized as policies and practices. Learning communities take us closer to personalizing and deprivatizing our practices and actions to assist us in changing the way we talk, plan, act, and engage with others different from ourselves.

This book serves as a guide in learning and changing (as necessary) your values and behaviors, the policies and practices of your school and district, and the manner in which you and your school interact with the cultural communities you serve. With this book, you have the opportunity to

- clarify your personal values, assumptions, and beliefs about providing all demographic groups of students access to high quality education,
- develop knowledge and skills in how to work with fellow educators in developing shared values for educating all demographic groups of students,
- develop knowledge and skills in creating policies and practices that align with shared values for educating all demographic groups of students, and
- choose to act differently when you acquire and develop knowledge and skills that make a difference in your life and in the lives of the members of your learning community.

This book provides real life examples of learning communities integrating the Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency and the tenets of professional learning communities. Table 1.1 serves as a framework for understanding, analyzing, and sustaining culturally proficient learning communities.

As you examine Table 1.1, please take a holistic view of the framework. The Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency and the tenets of professional learning communities do not exist in isolation of the other elements and tenets. We aligned the approaches—Cultural Proficiency and learning communities—as illustrations of how school leaders might integrate the elements and tenets. Unfortunately, the linear nature of the first two columns of Table 1.1 does not reflect the dynamics and interactions in which communities engage. Therefore, we added the third column to give guidance to communities as they explore opportunities to use the essential elements within the context of learning communities.

Table 1.1 A Framework for Understanding, Analyzing, and Sustaining Culturally Proficient Learning Communities

Essential Elements of Culturally Proficient Professional Learning (Inquiry, p. 78)	*Elements of Learning Communities (Hord, p. 9)*	*Cultural Competence Characterized By*
Assess culture: *Extent to which professional learning addresses cultural identity* Professional learning informs learners about their culture, the cultures of others, and the school's culture. Educational gaps are closed through appropriate uses of cultural, linguistic, learning, and communication styles.	Shared personal practice: Community members give and receive feedback that supports their individual improvement as well as that of the organization.	• Conducting individual and group assessments. • Developing peer-to-peer support toward specific goals. • Planning and facilitating intentional professional learning to improve student learning.
Value diversity: *Extent to which professional learning addresses cultural issues* Professional learning recognizes and meets the needs of multiple cultural, linguistic, learning, and communication styles.	Shared beliefs, values, and vision: Community members consistently focus on students' learning, which is strengthened by the community's learning.	• Acknowledging multiple perspectives. • Acknowledging common purpose(s). • Basing vision and actions on common assessment results.
Manage the dynamics of diversity: *Extent to which professional learning promotes and models the use of inquiry and dialogue related to multiple perspectives.* Professional learning opportunities incorporate multiple perspectives on relevant topics and build capacity for dialogue about conflict related to difference and diversity.	Shared and supportive leadership (collaboration): Administrators and community members hold shared power and authority for making decisions.	• Openly fostering discussions about race, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomics, and faith as related to the needs of the community. • Making decision-making processes transparent and subject to change based on community needs.

(Continued)

Table 1.1 (Continued)

Essential Elements of Culturally Proficient Professional Learning (Inquiry, p. 78)	*Elements of Learning Communities (Hord, p. 9)*	*Cultural Competence Characterized By*
Adapt to diversity: *Extent to which professional learning facilitates change to meet the needs of the community* Professional learning opportunities use data to drive change to better meet the needs of a diverse community.	Supportive and shared conditions: *Structural factors* provide time, facility, resources, and policies to support collaboration. *Relational factors* support the community's human and interpersonal development, openness, truth telling, and attitudes of respect and care among the members.	• Teaching appropriate communication skills to allow for multiple voices and experiences. • Developing adaptive practices to support newcomers as well as veteran community members.
Institutionalize cultural knowledge: *Extent to which professional learning shapes policies and practices that meet the needs of diverse learners* Professional learning opportunities are encouraged, shared, and applied in classrooms and throughout the school and the community for the purpose of improving student learning.	Collective learning and generative knowledge: Community focus is on what the community determines to learn and how they will learn it in order to address students' learning needs.	• Identifying and addressing student needs by benchmarking success indicators. • Developing a continuous improvement inquiry model to assess progress toward clearly stated achievement goals.

Sources: From *Culturally Proficient Inquiry: A Lens for Identifying and Examining Educational Gaps,* by Randall Lindsey, Stephanie Graham, Chris Westphal, and Cynthia Jew, 2008, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, and *Leading Professional Learning Communities: Voices From Research and Practice,* by Shirley M. Hord and William L. Sommers, 2008, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

This framework is used to guide the Maple View learning communities through the lens of Cultural Proficiency in Chapters 5 through 9. As you examine Table 1.1, what opportunities might you find for using

the Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency to enhance and deepen your professional community's learning?

Intentional Use of the Four Tools of Cultural Proficiency

Rare is the school that doesn't have in its mission statement or statement of core values a promise "to educate all students to high levels." If not those same words, similar words and sentiments abound in our schools. The problem is that those statements too often ignore the chronic underachievement of demographic groups of students. Mercifully, our current state of accountability has removed the option of continuing to ignore underachievement.

Most states in the United States, the provinces in Canada, and the U.S. government have reform efforts (e.g., the No Child Left Behind Act) that have, at least, begun to put the spotlight on chronic areas of student underachievement. Even with the many limitations that those pieces of legislation possess, they have one irrefutable common denominator: they have drawn attention to chronic underachievement that has been present for generations. It is our observation that learning communities and Cultural Proficiency provide principles and tools that we educators can use to direct our professional resources to benefit an ever widening proportion of the children and youth in our schools.

Cultural Proficiency is about serving the needs of historically underserved students within the context of serving the needs of all students. When education is delivered in a culturally proficient manner, historically underserved students gain access to educational opportunities intended to result in high academic achievement. When education is delivered in a culturally proficient manner, all students understand and value their own culture and the cultures of those around them. Concomitantly, when the educational experience is delivered in a culturally proficient manner, all educators, legislators, board members, and local business community members understand and value the culture of those around them in ways they have rarely experienced or appreciated.

In the following section, we present the definitions and descriptions of the four Tools of Cultural Proficiency. For first time readers of Cultural Proficiency, these descriptions serve as an overview of terms and tools. For many of our longtime readers of Cultural Proficiency books, this section serves as a refresher for the terms and tools.

The following are the Tools for Cultural Proficiency to guide our work:

- Overcoming the Barriers to Cultural Proficiency—the recognition that systems of historical oppression continue to exist and can be overcome by people and organizations that adapt their values, behaviors, policies, and practices to meet the needs of underserved cultural groups using the democratic means of public education.
- The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency—an inclusive set of core values that identify the centrality of culture in our lives and in our society.
- The Cultural Proficiency Continuum—six points along a continuum to indicate unhealthy and healthy ways of responding to cultural difference.
- The Five Essential Elements of Cultural Competence—five standards to guide a person's values and behaviors and a school or district's policies and practices in meeting the academic needs of cultural groups.

The Tools of Cultural Proficiency are interactive and interdependent and are discussed in the sections that follow. Tables 1.2 through 1.5 provide an orientation or overview to the four tools. Chapters 5 through 9 integrate the Tools of Cultural Proficiency with learning community principles to guide you and your colleagues as you continue to improve, expand, and enhance your practice in service and support of the diverse cultures in our schools and communities.

Tool 1: Overcoming Barriers to Cultural Proficiency—The *Why* of This *Work*

Guiding Question: What gets in the way of doing our learning community work in a culturally proficient manner?

Learning communities are a forum for recognizing, discussing, and confronting the barriers to Cultural Proficiency. In Chapter 4, we discuss Hord's (1997) tenets of learning communities, which include living a common vision, learning and collaborating with others, using disaggregated achievement data, and focusing on student learning. To be successful in culturally diverse communities, it is incumbent on educators to be able to engage in meaningful dialogue about professional and institutional barriers over which they have influence or control. Table 1.2 presents the Barriers to Cultural Proficiency.

The three bulleted items in Table 1.2 can be grouped into two overlapping themes. First, the presence of any form of oppression

Table 1.2 The Barriers to Cultural Proficiency

- **Resistance to Change**—Viewing change as needing to be done by others, not by one's self
- **Systems of Oppression**—Acknowledging and recognizing that racism, sexism, ethnocentrism, and other forms of oppression are real experiences
- **A Sense of Privilege and Entitlement**—Unawareness or indifference to benefits that accrue solely by one's membership in a gender, racial, or other cultural group

(e.g., racism) means that some people are harmed by certain practices; however, the obverse that is rarely discussed is that others benefit from those same practices in ways they don't even see or acknowledge. An example or two may be appropriate. If the two of us are voting on an issue and your vote is not counted due to your gender or race, then my vote gains value. Another example is if our school curriculum represents your experiences as mainstream in its curriculum and activities and my experiences are not represented, you gain value in our school.

The second theme present in Table 1.2 is that it is the individual who has to overcome resistance to change and adapt to the access and academic needs of the communities in our school service areas. A benefit of Cultural Proficiency is that it begins with an honest approach that recognizes the challenges within our society and then uses the tools provided by our democracy to demonstrate how to serve all demographic groups equitably.

Reflection Activity

Take a moment and read the words in Table 1.2. As you read these sentences as barriers, what feelings, reactions, or thoughts occur to you? Please record your responses in the space below.

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For many people, the words and phrases will appear scary and/or irritating. Some readers may respond with feeling blamed, angry, guilty, depressed, or with questions such as "But where do we

go from here?" Other readers may respond by feeling validated, curious, and with questions such as "Yes, so this is my reality and what are we going to do about it?"

This book is designed to use the second tool, the Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency, to address the range of questions generated from the reflections on Table 1.2. The basis of the guiding principles is recognizing that the barriers are real for many people, while for others they are invisible or not recognizable.

An example of our resistance to change as educators is embodied in the current discussions about the "achievement gap." Beginning in 1971, the National Association of Educational Progress, or NAEP, (Perie, Moran, & Lutkus, 2005) has documented, and circulated widely in the education community, detailed descriptions of academic achievement gaps. However, it has taken state and national education reforms, most widely evident in the federal reauthorization of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), to draw our concerted attention to the subject. The continuing presence of educational gaps is a challenge to those of us at all levels in the education community to examine why education and academic achievement gaps continue to persist among some demographic groups of our students. As a profession, we have acted as if the National Association of Educational Progress (NAEP) data does not exist. This ongoing struggle to address the inequities that are well documented is one of the barriers that gets in the way of developing democratic classrooms and schools.

Tool 2: Guiding Principles—*Guidance* in Doing Our Work

Guiding Question: Are we who we say we are as a learning community? As a school?

The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency provide a set of core values used in overcoming the Barriers to Cultural Proficiency. The barriers represent intractable issues that confound systemic school reform intended to provide adequate and appropriate education to historically underserved cultural groups of students.

The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency, described in Table 1.3, provide educators with an inclusive worldview that, for some, represents a paradigmatic shift in viewing other cultural groups as capable and contributing value to the educational community. These core principles become a lens through which to examine the biannual

Table 1.3 The Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency

- Culture is a predominant force in schools and in people's lives
- People are served in varying degrees by the dominant culture
- People have group identities and individual identities
- Diversity within cultures is vast and significant
- Each cultural group has unique cultural needs
- The best of both worlds enhances the capacity of all

NAEP reports and other similar data conclude that current educational practices are not equitable. For that reason, we recognize that some students are well served by current policies and practices, while at the same time many educators have turned a blind eye to students not well served.

Our experience has been that when school leaders talk about *change,* they describe modifications in the structures, patterns, and processes of educational practice. Structural changes, such as revising school calendars and grade-level or department configurations, that focus on targeted demographic groups of students or that require updated professional training have the potential to change educational practices and thereby improve services for some students. However, the intent of Cultural Proficiency is to use interventions such as structural changes as a first step in a well-planned effort to transform the social and cultural conditions within schools that have a diverse student population and/or interact with a diverse community. The six Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency offer a pathway of additional steps for leaders as they shift their perspective on change from *reforming* structures, policies, and rules in schools to *transforming* relationships, interactions, and the behaviors of the people within schools and districts.

Those who embrace the reform perspective concentrate their efforts on how to change structures and policies. The reform perspective too often flows from a predictable mission statement that espouses goals that are not reflective of the authentic day-to-day practices of people in the school. A commonplace mission statement purports that *All students will achieve at high levels;* however, in practice this espoused goal ignores the fact that many students from identifiable demographic groups are not achieving well and haven't been for several years. In not having an authentic mission statement, schools with a reform perspective resort to default mission statements with a core belief that some students *cannot* or *will not* be well served.

The school leader who holds a transformational perspective focuses on *leadership and educational practices to meet the generative opportunities and needs of diverse communities.* Leaders engaged in transformational activities build on the experiences of the communities in their school service area. These leaders direct their own leadership activities in ways that involve all members of the school community in becoming culturally proficient through having access to a curriculum and instruction program that meets the needs of the entire school community.

The Guiding Principles are the core values held by culturally proficient school leaders and teachers. These core values open up opportunities to build culturally proficient and functionally diverse communities in which people interact with one another in respectful and culturally responsive ways.

Reflection Activity

Take a moment and reread Table 1.3. What thoughts or feelings occur for you? In what ways are the Guiding Principles consistent with how you view yourself as an educator? Given these core values, in what ways might you want to consider your own values differently? How might these guiding principles guide decision-making and policy-setting processes? What might be some implications of one's shift in thinking aligned to the Guiding Principles? Please use the space below to record your responses.

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Tool 3: The Continuum—A Perspective for Our Work

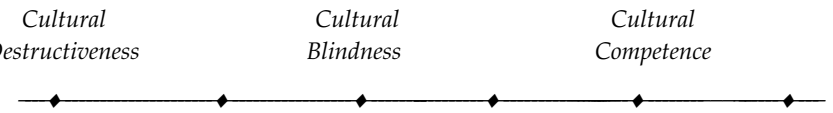
Guiding Question: How do we assess ourselves as individuals and as members of our learning community?

Whereas the Guiding Principles of Cultural Proficiency (Table 1.3) provide a frame for personal values and organizational policies, the Cultural Proficiency Continuum provides a guide for the *behaviors* of educators and the *practices* of learning communities and schools. The Continuum displayed in Table 1.4 describes unhealthy and healthy values and behaviors of educators and the policies and practices of schools; in other words, it provides a distinction between what is

wrong, unfair, unproductive, and unjust to the left side of the continuum (i.e., destructiveness, incapacity, blindness) and what is right, fair, productive, and just to the right side of the Continuum (i.e., precompetence, competence, proficiency).

Table 1.4 describes the six points of the Continuum. Take a moment to examine the table closely, noting the action words on each side of the Continuum. Behaviors and practices located on the left side of the Continuum (i.e., destructiveness, incapacity, blindness)

Table 1.4 The Cultural Proficiency Continuum: Depicting Unhealthy and Healthy Practices



Compliance-Based Tolerance for Diversity, Informed by the Barriers	*Transformation for Equity, Informed by the Guiding Principles*
• **Cultural Destructiveness**—Seeking to eliminate the cultures of "others" in all aspects of the school and in relationship with their communities. • **Cultural Incapacity**—Trivializing other cultures and seeking to make the culture of others appear to be wrong. • **Cultural Blindness**—Pretending not to see or acknowledge the culture of others and choosing to ignore the experiences of cultural groups within the school and community.	• **Cultural Precompetence**—Becoming increasingly aware of what you and the school don't know about working in diverse settings. It is at this key level of development that you and the school can move in a positive, constructive direction or you can vacillate, stop, and possibly regress. • **Cultural Competence**—Manifesting your personal values and behaviors and the school's policies and practices in a manner that is inclusive of cultures that are new or different from yours and the school's. • **Cultural Proficiency**—Advocating for lifelong learning for the purpose of being increasingly effective in serving the educational needs of cultural groups. Holding the vision that you and the school are instruments for creating a socially just democracy.

Source: Adapted from *Culturally Proficient Leadership: The Personal Journey Begins Within,* 2009, by Raymond D. Terrell and Randall B. Lindsey, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

give evidence of barriers. Behaviors and practices on the right side of the Continuum (i.e., precompetence, competence, proficiency), specifically those regarded as culturally competent and proficient, reflect commitment to the Guiding Principles as educators and schools' doing what is right for our students.

Reflection Activity

Now that you have studied the Continuum, what are your thoughts and reactions? Where do you see yourself relative to the students in your school? What might be some practices within your school community that represent the points along the Continuum? How might you and your colleagues make use of this Continuum as part of your personal and professional learning? Please use the space below to record your responses.

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Tool 4: Five Essential Elements—The *How* of Our Work

Guiding Question: Do our actions align with who we say we are as a learning community?

Most of us want our educational practices to be situated to the right side of the Continuum but may not know how to get there and may not have the resolve to ask the difficult questions, such as *Why not?* By using the Guiding Principles as an ethical framework and the Continuum to frame our practice, the Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency serve as standards for educators and schools alike. These five elements become the standards against which we measure the efficacy of our curriculum, the effectiveness of instructional strategies, the relevance of professional development, the utility of systems of assessment and accountability, and the intent of parent and community communications and outreach.

The five Essential Elements provide standards for educators and schools; in other words, they provide for the alignment of ethical principles with educator behaviors and school practices. Table 1.5 contains concise descriptions of the essential elements. Please note

Table 1.5 The Essential Elements for Culturally Proficient Practices

- **Assessing Cultural Knowledge**—Learning about others' cultures, about how educators and the school as a whole react to others' cultures, and what you need to do to be effective in cross-cultural situations. Also, leading for learning about the school and its grade levels and departments as cultural entities.
- **Valuing Diversity**—Creating informal and formal decision-making groups inclusive of people whose viewpoints and experiences are different from yours and the dominant group at the school and that will enrich conversations, decision making, and problem solving.
- **Managing the Dynamics of Difference**—Modeling problem solving and conflict resolution strategies as a natural and normal process within the culture of the schools and the cultural contexts of the communities of your school.
- **Adapting to Diversity**—Learning about cultural groups different from your own and the ability to use others' cultural experiences and backgrounds in all school settings.
- **Institutionalizing Cultural Knowledge**—Making learning about cultural groups and their experiences and perspectives an integral part of the school's professional development.

Source: Adapted from *Culturally Proficient Leadership: The Personal Journey Begins Within*, 2009, by Raymond D. Terrell and Randall B. Lindsey, Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

the empowering language of action that is part of each element. Each element serves as a standard for individual professional behavior and schoolwide practices.

The Essential Elements exist at the *cultural competence* point of the Continuum (Table 1.4). *Cultural Proficiency* is when an educator or school has incorporated the Essential Elements into their practice to the extent that they develop at least these intentional and ongoing commitments:

- A commitment to social justice that addresses the educational needs of all current and emerging cultural groups in the school and community
- A commitment to advocacy that is natural, normal, and effective
- A commitment to mentoring the underserved to have access to educational opportunity and to mentoring those well served by current practice to become aware of and responsive to underserved individuals and cultural groups—the underserved could be colleagues, students, and/or members of the community

REFLECTION

How do you react to the Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency? In what ways do these elements support your current practices? To what extent do you want these standards to guide your educational practice and that of your school? Please use the space below to record your responses.

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GOING DEEPER: 3 KEYS

What are 3 key learnings from this chapter? What are 3 key quotes or comments from the chapter that resonate with you? What are 3 key questions you now have? Thinking of your role as an educator, how does the information from this chapter cause you to think about your practice? In what ways does this information cause you to think differently about your school or district?

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A recurring theme in this book is the importance of *context*. In the same manner that your classroom, school, or community provides a context for your work as an educator, our history provides a context within which we function. Chapter 2 provides important information for you as you understand at ever-deeper levels what it means to provide education to all demographic groups of students in democratic societies that have struggled with equity and diversity.

2

Getting Centered

Our History

The future is in our hands. . . . A history that leaves out minorities reinforces separation, but an inclusive history bridges the divide.

—Takaki, 2008, p. 435

Getting Centered

As you read Takaki's words in the epigraph, what thoughts about North America's histories come to mind? Whose history is told through our textbooks, media, and curricula? When you read or hear terms such as *segregation, integration, equity*, or *diversity,* what images, thoughts, feelings, or reactions occur for you? When these terms are used in your professional settings, what reactions do you observe in your colleagues? Please use the space below to provide responses that describe your and your colleagues' responses.

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Being a member of a learning community can be exciting as we learn and apply curricula and instructional strategies that increase the likelihood of our students' academic and social success. In Chapter 1, we described the importance of context for our students, our communities, and ourselves. This chapter provides a brief overview of the history of equity in Canada and the United States as another context for insuring the success of our learning communities. In the same way that culture is important in our society, our histories are important in that they provide great insight into the educational gaps that we are addressing in our schools today.

Equity as a Learning Community Topic

If you are early in your career as an educator, the topic of equity in education is somewhat familiar. Most likely it is an educational topic that is as natural and normal to you as are subjects such as differentiated instruction, professional learning communities, and standards-based assessments. However, if you are an experienced, veteran educator, you have seen these topics emerge during the span of your career. While each of these topics has had its own evolution in our educational practices, the topic of equity has evolved as part of larger national dynamics. For schools especially, dealing with equity issues and topics is a continuing, evolving process.

Whether a new or veteran educator, a question that may arise for you is, *If we are a learning community, then why focus on issues of equity, why not just focus on doing a good job?* This book is devoted to responding to that question, and we begin by tracing some of the important issues involving equity that have unfolded for the last two generations. As your learning community continues to mature and evolve, one of the things you will encounter is that each of your colleagues has a different life story that has influenced their successes and challenges. The more diverse your learning community is, the more varied the life stories are likely to be.

Similar to our life stories, the communities we serve have multiple and varied stories, many of which are filled with instances of segregation and inequity that persist in many communities today. A distinct advantage for our schools, and in particular our learning communities, is our ability to identify the structures within our own values and behaviors and the policies and practices of our schools that either facilitate or inhibit student learning. Having an understanding of our history of equity and inequity is an important step in our learning how to become a culturally proficient learning community.

One of the more frustrating aspects of serving as a professional educator is being confronted in the popular media with pronouncements about the utter failure of public education. Declarations about the failure of public education in the United States were amplified by the report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Even though the findings of that widely distributed report were called into question by another much less publicized report that was also authorized by the executive branch of the federal government (Wartell & Huelskamp, 1991), myths about the failure of public education have been propounded. Actually, the findings of *A Nation at Risk* weren't as mythical as they were carefully selected.

A significant weakness of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) was its rush to label public education as failing rather than report the most important issue, namely the existence of the achievement gap. The cultural and demographic groups of students who had historically done well in our schools were still achieving well; what was new in the widely distributed 1983 report was the increased percentage of students from low socioeconomic and racial or ethnic minority populations who were not as academically successful—their academic test results depressed overall school performance averages. If there is good news from today's accountability mandates, it is that attention is being paid to the achievement gap as an issue that society and schools must serve and that the achievement gap is not seen as an artifact of cultural *differences*. However, the damage was done and the myths about failing public education have continued.

An Equity Context for Schools

This section is designed to provide a historical context for considering equity issues within the formal and informal learning communities in your school. As educators serious about responding to the educational needs of all our students, we believe a description of equity and equality in our schools may serve to better equip you in your professional endeavors.

The histories of Canada and the United States are ones of continuously expanding the opportunities of a democratic society to ever more people. The years since the founding of our democracies have been years of marvelous successes for some of our citizens and years where others struggled for basic freedoms. Some people immigrated to our countries and in two to three generations were able to build

independent lives for their families and their communities. However, other people were systematically discriminated against, whether already here or brought to this country forcefully. Even among those who were the objects of intentional discrimination, many have become economically and socially successful, but not in the proportions of those who never faced discrimination.

In the United States, many purport a historic national image of the "rugged individualists" who worked hard against daunting odds in order to become successful. However, that claim has to be measured against a legacy of wars of oppression fought to subjugate First Nations People, a civil war fought in part to free African slaves, and a systematic denial of access to the fruits of democracy due to people's skin color, gender, sexual orientation, faith, ableness, and native language. Since World War II, explicit progress has been made through the use of executive orders, federal and state legislation, and decisions at all levels of the judiciary that seek to counter both active discrimination and systemic, systematic forms of oppression.

The challenge for those of us who lead schools is that both of these very different experiences of success and oppression vie for attention in our schools. Too often, our history and literature courses venerate the former stories and minimize the latter ones. Today, both stories persist in our schools in the form of differential achievement. No matter how one might find fault with the accountability movement, at least it has brought the reality of achievement and educational gaps to the attention of our countries. The sad reality is that those access and achievement gaps are historical, but they have remained invisible to most of the educational community due to our selective vision and our choice to see only the data we want to see.

The integrity of the Cultural Proficiency approach rests on being direct and honest about the historical downside of our societies and on pointing to democratic approaches for healthy responses to inequity. The continuum and essential elements introduced in Chapter 1 and developed more deeply in Chapters 5 through 9 represent democratic approaches to the education of all students. The journey to developing democratic schools, classrooms, teachers, school leaders, and community members has been and is fraught with interruptions and barriers.

As you read the rest of the chapter, think of your current school or classroom and reflect on the extent to which any of these occurrences is present in your students' experiences, their parents' or guardians' experiences, your curriculum, or your colleagues' experiences.

School Segregation

Prior to the 1950s, the separation of students by racial, gender, ethnic, language, and/or national origin groups was based in decisions supported by executive, legislative, and judicial decisions throughout our countries. Illustrations of those actions include:

- Legal forms of segregation in the southern United States that began with slavery and were codified after the Civil War into Jim Crow laws, which defined racial groups and mandated the separation of those races in public settings (e.g., in schools, busses, and restaurants). These practices were based on legislative decisions made by southern states and upheld by state and federal court review.
- Restrictive covenants that have been used throughout Canada and the United States to enforce neighborhood and business patterns.
- The placement of First Nations people on reservations throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. First Nations people, once located to the reservations, were often moved again to less desirable locations when valuable mineral deposits or otherwise desirable property were made available to people of northern European descent.
- Provided impetus by the Mexican Cession of 1848, the encroachment that had been under way for well over a century in what is now the southwestern United States removed native residents from the political, economic, and educational mainstream and increasingly marginalized native residents as European Americans immigrated into that area.
- The Chinese Exclusion Acts of 1882 and 1902 were federal legislative acts supported by the executive and judicial branches of the U.S. government. These acts of Congress were specifically designed to control and minimize immigration once the Chinese were no longer needed for labor-intensive projects such as building railroads throughout the western United States.
- Legally sanctioned segregation in both Canada and the United States resulted in citizens of Japanese ancestry being herded into internment camps during World War II.

Though most of us have some awareness of these phases of our country's histories, and some of us have lived these phases of our histories, it is a legacy that is rarely discussed in educational circles and continues to have influence throughout our social and educational

system. These dark periods in our histories created deep and cruel inequities that persist within our nations today. The United States expresses foundational values of liberty and justice for all. The conflict between those foundational values and our everyday behavior and experience is real and painful for many underserved students in our schools. It is not easy to "get over" these dark periods in our history due to the inequities that they created at the time, and it is necessary to acknowledge the sense of inequity that endures today. The events described in this section are testimony to the reality that the equity movement is historical and demands our continued attention as educators.

Desegregation

Desegregation is the legal response in the United States to segregation. Desegregation is just as the term implies, it is to *de-segregate* our society—namely schools for our purpose with this book. There are landmark cases, most of which are well known to readers. We review them here, not only to bring our recent past to our collective attention, but also to let us know that equity has been an arduous struggle. Examples of landmark cases include:

- The 1954 *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* decisions ended segregation in public facilities and had its genesis in numerous legal initiatives, such as the 1947 California case, *Mendez v. Westminster,* that struck down separate schools for Mexican-American and white students. Both decisions drew their rationales from the equal protection clause of the 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution.
- Though the *Brown* decisions officially ended *de jure* segregation, *de facto* segregation did not end. To this day, *de facto* segregation—segregation practices that are not the result of legal mandates—continues. Nonetheless, the *Brown* decisions provided the legal and political leverage by which segregation policies and practices in schools could be legally dismantled.

Integration for Equal Access and Equal Rights

The shift from desegregation to integration was of monumental proportions in the history of the United States. Although school desegregation focused initially on the separation of black and white people, in the western and southwestern United States, Latino and

First Nation children were included in the desegregation programs. The 1960s was a period of activism for social justice, with the push for civil rights that included women and other cultural groups. Integration was evidenced in the following ways:

- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 legally ended segregation in all public places; however, the Act was ineffective, as has usually been the case when disenfranchised groups have used the courts and the legislatures to seek redress of their grievances.
- The reality of school desegregation has been beset with problems from the very beginning. Despite many successes in which children benefited from school desegregation (Hawley, 1983; Orfield & Frankenberg, 2007), public attention continued to focus on cases of resistance and failure. Private academies quickly emerged to offer segregated alternatives to European American students, first in the southern United States and later throughout the country. Concurrent with expansion of cities into suburbs in the 1960s was flight to escape unwanted assignments to schools in urban areas. In some cases, these parents did not want to have their children attend a school outside their neighborhood, but in many cases, parents simply wanted to isolate their kids from children with cultural backgrounds different from their own. Too often, white parents viewed children who were racially and ethnically different from themselves as genetically or culturally inferior. Children and parents who were the targets of these reactions often became alienated from the dominant culture.
- The desegregation of schools had two consequences, one intended and the other seemingly unintended. First, voluntary and mandatory school desegregation efforts were designed to provide children of color with the same opportunities white children were receiving. Second, the expansion of entitlement programs (e.g., Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Emergency School Assistance Act) led to many children of color being placed in programs labeled for the culturally and economically *disadvantaged.* Irrespective of the intentionality of the consequence of these programs, the labels became permanently associated with ethnicity, and students in desegregated schools continued to receive substandard education. The labels and practices, created and designed by the dominant culture and paid for by federally funded programs, assisted in maintaining the ineffectiveness of legal desegregation. During

this era, we educators became aware of the effect of teacher expectations, gender bias, and second-language acquisition on the quality of instruction.

- Educators and community supporters engaged in providing special needs students with full access to mainstream educational programs through the due process clause of the 1954 Brown v. Topeka U.S. Supreme Court decision to gain access to public schools in unprecedented ways. Legislation has been crafted and implemented that provides equitable educational opportunities to special needs populations. Principal among federal laws are Public Law 94–142, *Education for All Handicapped Children Act* (1975), Public Law 101–476, *Individuals with Disabilities Act* (1990), and H.R. 1350, *Reauthorization of IDEA* (2004), which is designed to apply the standards-reforms of NCLB to special needs students (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009).

Equal Benefits and Multiculturalism

With the 1970s came new energy for the civil rights movement. The push for equal rights by women and people of color, which has its roots in the very founding of our country, had a focus. The energy spawned by legislative and judicial successes saw women and people of color striving to extend the legal gains won during previous decades to broader societal contexts, including schools. Educators encountering children of diverse cultures in their classrooms, often for the first time, requested new approaches, strategies, and techniques for teaching them. This demand led to the educational emphasis on multiculturalism, which is a radical departure from the assimilationist, or melting pot, model. It must be noted, though, that the melting pot model had worked well for eastern and southern Europeans but did not work as well for people of color. Concurrently, women's issues emerged to take a prominent place in many schools' professional development activities. Though not prominent in many schools, in the broader society, gay men and lesbians became increasingly vocal in advocating for their rights and access to equal opportunities and benefits.

Diversity

As corporations in Canada and the United States continued to expand into international venues and realize the growing diversity in the labor pools, their executives recognized it was good business to address diversity-related issues. Diversity training for managers and

other employees took its place alongside marketing, recruitment, and leadership development. As is often the case, our PK–12 school systems took cues from the business sector, and forward-looking schools and school districts began to seek, create, and implement diversity-related programs ostensibly to support classroom teachers in working with students culturally different from themselves. The upside of many of these programs was the creation of awareness of difference by participants, while the downside is that too often they were disconnected from the daily routines of curriculum and instruction.

Scholars such as James Banks (1994), Ron Edmonds (1979), Geneva Gay (2000), bell hooks (1990), Asa Hilliard (1991), and Myra and David Sadker (1994), among others, connected the business of schooling to diversity issues for those who were interested in reading and learning. Also, during this era, aspects of diversity began to be expanded from ethnicity, language, and gender to include sexual orientation, ableness, and age.

Into the Twenty-First Century: Cultural Competence and Cultural Proficiency

The Essential Elements of Cultural Proficiency provide basic behavior standards for educators to effectively interact with colleagues, students, parents or guardians, and community members who are culturally different from them. Cultural Proficiency is a way of being that enables people to successfully engage in new environments. The works of Comer (1988), Levin (1988), Sizer (1985), Slavin (1990, 1996), Nieto (2004), and Orfield and Frankenberg (2007) are consistent with the basic tenets of Cultural Proficiency. These prominent researchers believe that all children can learn, and their research demonstrates that children from any neighborhood can learn well if they are taught well. Although the national debate over school desegregation has not ended, it now focuses on the equitable distribution of human and capital resources. One of the many contemporary trends in education focuses on finding ways to appreciate the rich differences among students. Many educators wonder how—or even whether—the previous decade's focus on multiculturalism really differs from the next decade's emphasis on diversity.

This shift is not merely a superficial change in terminology but a much-needed, profound change in perspective (Nieto, 2004). Unlike the trend toward multiculturalism, which focused narrowly on students' ethnic and racial differences, the shift toward diversity responds to societal trends by urging us to take a broader approach to

addressing equity issues, encompassing a wide range of differences, including race, culture, language, class, caste, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and physical and sensory abilities among students.

Equity and Professional Communities Learning = *Will*

Issues related to equity are not new, no more than is the achievement gap. What has emerged in this generation that commands our attention is the opportunity to make a commitment to provide equitable access to educational opportunity. Prominent scholars, researchers, and social commentators have pressed the issue for equity in our schools for two generations. Edmonds (1979) identified correlates for schools effective for all students, yet we continue to "discover" those factors as new. Hilliard (1991) challenged us and asked if we had the *will* to educate all children. Kozol (1991, 2005, 2007) described what is occurring in too many schools with the terms *shame* and *savage inequalities*. Berliner (2006) made a compelling and chilling case for the profundity of poverty and its effect on our schools, educational policy, and society. Importantly, Berliner (2006) illustrated the intersection of poverty *and* race/ethnicity that undercuts the notion prevalent in some professional development circles that the achievement gap is only a socioeconomic issue.

The opportunity that learning communities possess is the willingness and ability to convene as communities to examine who they are and who they want to be in relationship to the communities they serve. Learning communities, by definition, are intentional in what they learn and what they want to learn. Culturally proficient learning communities place learning within the context of the cultural communities they serve. Knowing the histories of our local school communities as well as knowing our national histories helps us bridge those divides created by exclusion by developing inclusive futures.

REFLECTION

What might be issues of inequity facing your school community? In what ways are resources shared among community members? Who is involved in decision making? Record your responses in the space below:

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GOING DEEPER: 3 KEYS

What are 3 key learnings from this chapter? What are 3 key quotes or comments from the chapter that resonate with you? What are 3 key questions you now have? Thinking of your role as an educator, how does the information from this chapter cause you to think about your practice? In what ways does this information cause you to think differently about your school or district?

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3

Getting Centered

The Evolution of Learning Communities

We can work to change the embedded structures so that our schools become more hospitable places for student and adult learning. But little will really change unless we change ourselves.

—Barth, 1991, p. 128

Getting Centered

Many educators have told stories of successful schools and the key elements that insured their success. Researchers have found evidence that schools that share a common vision, work collaboratively, share decision making, engage in continuous learning, and experience supportive leadership environments have the potential to increase every student's journey to success (Garmston & Wellman, 2008; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Louis & Kruse, 1995; Dufour & Eaker, 1998).

In what ways do you and your colleagues embrace or question the value and power of learning communities? In your school, what support or resistance exists to move from isolation to collaboration—to working side by side—to inquiring and valuing the contributions and