



Research. Results. Practice.

CULTIVATING CROSS-CULTURAL TOOLS

Tool #1: Perspective Taking

Building the knowledge, experiences, and skills that replace bias-based beliefs.

Why This Tool Matters

Perspective taking is the ability to understand a situation from another person's cultural and lived experience rather than relying solely on your own interpretation. It asks educators to temporarily leave their own "seat" and intentionally consider how a student, family member, or colleague may be experiencing the same situation differently.

Perspective taking interrupts the tendency to explain student behavior through stereotypes, colorblindness, deficit thinking, or poverty disciplining. Instead of asking, *"What's wrong with this student?"* educators begin asking, *"What experiences might explain what I'm observing?"* This shift leads to more accurate instructional decisions and stronger relationships.

What It Looks Like in Schools

Imagine a student who frequently arrives late to first period. Rather than assuming the student lacks motivation, an educator walks the student's bus route, observes the morning arrival process, and speaks with the student about transportation challenges. What initially appeared to be a motivation problem becomes a systems problem.

Similarly, educators might periodically sit with students from marginalized groups during lunch simply to listen to their experiences of school. These experiences help replace assumptions with understanding.

Cultivating This Tool

- Shadow students for part of their school day.
- Walk the routes students travel.

- Listen before interpreting.
- Replace assumptions with questions.
- Seek multiple sources of evidence before drawing conclusions.

Reflection Questions

- What assumptions did I make before gathering additional information?
- What surprised me?
- How did this experience change my understanding?

Fill Your Shopping Cart

This month...

- ☐ Shadow one student.
- ☐ Listen to three student stories.
- ☐ Ask one family about their educational experiences.
- ☐ Reflect on how these experiences challenged previous assumptions.

Related Tools

-  Cultural Learning
-  Cultural Reasoning
-  Intercultural Interaction

References

Fergus, E. *Desegregating Ourselves*, Chapter 5.

Galinsky, A. D., & Moskowitz, G. B. (2000).