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What's Your Cultural Proficiency?

by The Cultural Proficiency Group

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When times get hard, people often pull apart along lines of race, religion, and nationality. What skills do we need to develop in order to navigate the misunderstandings and mistrust that can accompany diversity? Few people are born culturally proficient; this continuum provides a tool to assess where you and the groups you work with stand—and where you might go. Excerpted from *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders*, by Randall B. Lindsey, Kikanza Nuri Robins, Raymond D. Terrell, published by Corwin Press.

There are six points along the cultural proficiency continuum that indicate how people see and respond to difference:

1. Cultural destructiveness: See the difference, stomp it out. The elimination of other people's cultures
2. Cultural incapacity: See the difference, make it wrong. Belief in the superiority of one's own culture and behavior that dis-empowers another's culture.
3. Cultural blindness: See the difference, act like you don't. Acting as if the cultural differences you see do not matter, or not recognizing that there are differences among and between cultures.
4. Cultural pre-competence: See the difference, respond inadequately. Awareness of the limitations of one's skills or an organization's practices when interacting with other cultural groups.
5. Cultural competence: See the difference, understand the difference that difference makes. Interacting with other cultural groups using the five essential elements of cultural proficiency:
 - o Name the differences: Assess culture
 - o Claim the differences: Value diversity
 - o Reframe the differences: Manage the dynamics of difference
 - o Train about differences: Adapt to diversity
 - o Change for differences: Institutionalize cultural knowledge
6. Cultural proficiency: See the differences and respond positively and affirmingly. Esteeming culture, knowing how to learn about individual and organizational culture, and interacting effectively in a variety of cultural environments.

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