



Five Ways to Be a Cultural Mediator

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What is a Cultural Mediator? A Cultural Mediator is someone who works to establish collaborative and respectful relations across cultures.

Listen and Observe. In order to understand the cultural backgrounds of a student, it is important to listen and observe her or him in the classroom and on the playground.

- a. What sports or activities does the student like to play?
- b. Does he or she do it as a group or independently?
- c. Does the student talk about playing the sport or activity with a family member?
- d. Do not stereotype a student. Ask students for information. For example, if a student is Mexican American, this does not mean automatically that the student likes soccer rather than football.

Learn. Find out additional information about cultural groups from written materials, local community leaders, educators, and parents.

- a. Go to a local community function like an international festival. Get to know parents outside of the school environment.
- b. Pick up a local community newspaper to learn about the issues of the community.
- c. Ask parents to serve as guest speakers in the classroom. Most parents have professional expertise, whether it is about cooking, ranching, finance, or computers.

Be Open (Comfortably Uncomfortable). Have unbiased conversations with cross-cultural individuals and learn their views and values. People may see and respond to the same events or issues differently.

- a. Have a parent night activity, at a local recreation or community center, like Family Vision Board Party, Family and Friendsgiving, or Family Math Night. Allow parents to plan events or ask parents how you can make the event more culturally relevant.
- b. If parents need transportation, contact your principal or district office to see if a bus can pick up parents and children from the neighborhood so people can attend school events.

Clarify. In a clear and objective way, identify areas of conflict to discuss.

- a. Ask parents and students about how to make schools more effective and welcoming.
- b. Bring in parents who want to organize a volunteer program in your classroom.
- c. Maybe parents are interested in helping in the classroom, but they work. Can parents participate in the classroom even though they work during the day? What are some of the limitations your parents must deal with?

Collaborate. Bring people together to establish common goals. What are the goals of parents and students? Are they the same as teachers' goals?

- A. Are parents interested in learning about college access issues?
- B. How can teachers and parents work closely for the benefit of students?

