Alternative Self-Assessment Tools

There are many assessments available for diversity and inclusion. Unfortunately, there are very few in the world of education based athletics and performing arts. Two simple alternative self-assessment tools are described in a Ford and Whiting (2008) article on "Cultural Competence: Preparing Gifted Students for a Diverse Society." The following is an excerpt from that article that describes these two basic assessment tools.

The word *competence* is used because it implies that one has the capacity to function effectively. When individuals (or organizations) are culturally competent, they acknowledge and incorporate—at all levels—the importance of culture, the assessment of cross-cultural relations, the expansion of cultural knowledge, and the adaptation of services to meet cultural development needs (Cross, 1988; Cross et al., 1989).

Cross (1988) delineated levels of responding to cultural differences, based on a continuum ranging from *cultural destructiveness* to *cultural proficiency*. As a continuum, the model acknowledges that there are a variety of possibilities between two extremes. In describing the following levels, Cross applied them to organizations. We also apply them to individuals.

1. ***Cultural destructiveness.*** The most negative end of the continuum is represented by attitudes, policies, and practices that are destructive to cultures and consequently to the individuals within a culture. At this level, culturally diverse individuals and groups are considered genetically and culturally inferior. The most extreme example of this orientation would be individuals and groups that actively participate in cultural genocide: the purposeful destruction or elimination of a culture, as described by Allport (1954), as was the case with lynching and sterilization, for example.

2. ***Cultural incapacity.*** At this next level, the individual or organization does not intentionally seek to be culturally destructive; rather, it lacks the capacity to help culturally diverse individuals or groups. The organization or individual remains extremely biased and believes in the racial superiority of the dominant group. Here, individuals may act as agents of oppression by enforcing racist policies and maintaining stereotypes. Decisions and actions are guided by ignorance and an unrealistic and unwarranted fear of those who are culturally different. Behaviors associated with this level may include disproportionately allocating resources, discriminatory hiring practices, subtle

messages to culturally diverse persons that they are not valued or welcome, and lower expectations of those who are culturally diverse. Policies and practices at both the individual and institutional level, for example, would be designed to keep culturally diverse students out of gifted education classrooms and services.

3. *Cultural blindness.* At the midpoint on the continuum, the individual or organization provides services with the stated philosophy of being unbiased. They function with the belief that color or culture makes no difference and that "we are all the same." For example, culturally blind educators believe that teaching or instructional approaches traditionally used by the dominant culture are universally applicable (Ford &Grantham, 2003). This view reflects a well-intended liberal philosophy where one might proudly assert "I don't see color"; however, the consequences of such a belief are to make services so ethnocentric as to render them virtually useless to all but the most assimilated persons. Such services ignore cultural strengths, encourage assimilation, and blame the victims for their problems. Members of minority communities are viewed from the cultural deprivation model (Ford & Grantham, 2003; Valencia, 1997), which asserts that problems are the result of inadequate cultural resources. In short, culturally blind individuals, professionals, and schools suffer from a deficit of information and often lack the means through which they can obtain needed information. While they often view themselves as unbiased and, hence, responsive to diverse needs, their ethnocentrism is reflected in attitude, policy and practice. Student performance (e.g., test scores, grades, graduation rates) usually is measured by how closely the culturally diverse student or group approximates a middle class non-minority existence. In gifted education, this philosophy may be evident in an unwillingness of educators to consider alternative assessments, to modify cutoff scores, or to change policies and procedures to open doors to diverse students. At this level, such changes are thought to "water down" or dilute quality.

4. *Cultural pre-competence.* According to Cross (1988), culturally competent individuals and organizations are characterized by acceptance and respect for differences, vigilant attention to the dynamics of difference, ongoing self-assessment regarding culture, regular expansion of cultural knowledge and resources, and a variety of adaptations to delivery, service, and instructional models in order to better meet the needs of diverse students. In essence, the culturally competent individual or organization is proactive—it strives to hire culturally competent staff, and seeks advice and guidance from culturally diverse families and communities on all matters.

5. *Advanced cultural competence.* The most positive and progressive level of the model is advanced cultural competence or proficiency. At this level culture is held in the highest regard. Culturally competent individuals or organizations assertively and proactively develop new educational models and approaches based on culture.

Accordingly, the culturally competent school, for example, hires staff who are specialists in culturally competent practice, and who are advocates for improved relations between cultures throughout the school.

In summarizing his model, Cross (1988) maintained that the degree of cultural competence an individual or organization achieves is not dependent on any one factor. Attitudes, policies, and practice are three major areas in which development must occur if there is to be movement toward cultural competence. Attitudes change to become less ethnocentric and biased. Policies change to become more flexible and equitable. Practices become more congruent with the culture of the students and community. Growth, meaning positive movement along the continuum and levels, results from being aware, visionary, and proactive.

Storti (1998) described four levels of cultural competence, ranging from blissful ignorance to spontaneous sensitivity, as outlined in Table 1. According to his model, competence should be viewed in light of two dimensions: (a) conscious versus unconscious awareness of diversity, and (b) competence versus incompetence in knowledge, skills, and dispositions.

1. *Blissful ignorance.* The individual is unconscious of cultural differences and lacks competence to address differences. This level is tantamount to colorblindness or culture blindness, a sort of obliviousness to diversity.

2. *Troubling ignorance.* The individual is conscious of culturally differences, but lacks competence to address them. Awareness is present, understanding is weak, and strategies and resources to address differences are missing or elementary.

3. *Deliberate sensitivity.* The individual is conscious of culturally differences and is becoming more confident and competent at addressing culturally differences. The desire to be competent is present, along with understanding the advantages of such competence.

4. *Spontaneous sensitivity.* The individual is culturally competent; being competent is somewhat automatic as there is awareness, understanding, and respect for diversity. Strategies, resources, and skills are available.

TABLE 1: Storti's levels of cultural competence.

	Incompetent	*Competent*
Unconscious	Level 1: Blissful ignorance Individual is not aware that cultural differences exist between him/her and another person. It does not occur to individual that she may be making cultural mistakes or that she may be misinterpreting much of the behavior of others.	Level 4: Spontaneous sensitivity Individual no longer has to think about what he is doing in order to be culturally sensitive (in a culture the person knows well). Culturally appropriate behavior comes naturally to individual, and he trusts his own intuition because it has been reconditioned by what he knows about cross-cultural interactions.
Conscious	Level 2: Troubling ignorance Individual realizes that there are cultural differences between himself and another person but understands very little about these differences. He knows there is a problem, but doesn't know the magnitude of it. Individual is worried about whether he will ever figure out these differences in others.	Level 3: Deliberate sensitivity Individual knows there are cultural differences between people; she knows some of the differences and tries to modify her own behavior to be sensitive to these differences. This does not come naturally, but individual makes a conscious effort to behave in culturally sensitive ways. Individual is in the process of replacing old intuitions with new ones.

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