

Training Model for Scholars Based on Gloria Ladson-Billings' Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP), as developed by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994), is an educational philosophy that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes. We will use this approach to train the scholars in the Ujima School Counseling Program.

This model involves three core components: academic achievement, cultural competence, and sociopolitical consciousness. Each of these will be integrated into the scholar training program in the following ways:

1. Academic Achievement:

In the context of the Ujima Center, this component will be focused on developing professional knowledge and skills that counselors need to support student success effectively. The program will ensure that counselors are knowledgeable in both traditional counseling techniques and emerging research and trends in school counseling. This includes an understanding of how to use data in designing interventions and how to work within a team to support students.

2. Cultural Competence:

Cultural competence will be a major focus of the training program. This will be achieved through coursework and hands-on experiences that expose scholars to diverse perspectives and cultural practices. Scholars will learn how to use culturally relevant strategies in counseling and will gain an understanding of how a student's cultural background might affect their experiences in school. The program will also ensure that scholars have a strong understanding of how to work effectively with families and communities from diverse cultural backgrounds.

3. Sociopolitical Consciousness:

The training program will also incorporate activities and discussions to raise scholars' awareness of the larger political, social, and economic context in which schools operate. This includes an understanding of how these factors can affect student mental health and the school climate. Scholars will be encouraged to take on advocacy roles and will learn how to navigate and challenge systems that may present barriers to student success.

The Ujima Center's activities within the Culturally Relevant Pedagogy framework:

1. Academic Achievement:

- a. First Aid Mental Health Training for Graduate Students: Equips them with valuable skills to understand and respond to mental health issues, contributing to their academic and professional development.
- b. Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS) Training: Enhances understanding of diverse student needs and systemic approaches to addressing these needs, contributing to academic and professional competence.
- c. Peer Mentoring: Fosters academic achievement through mutual learning and support.
- d. Culturally Relevant Teaching Workshops: Helps students develop and refine their culturally relevant teaching strategies.
- e. Research Projects: Encourage students to conduct research projects on culturally relevant topics, fostering their academic prowess and enhancing their professional knowledge.

2. Cultural Responsive:
 - a. Theories and Applications in African-Centered Counseling Course: Enhances cultural competence by providing students with African-centered counseling practices to use with communities of color.
 - b. Culturally Responsive Counseling Training: Develops cultural sensitivity and skills to address unique cultural backgrounds of the students they serve.
 - c. Community Engagement Programs: Engages students with the communities they serve, providing opportunities to understand cultural nuances.
 - d. Cultural Exchange Activities: Creates an environment of mutual respect and appreciation for diverse cultures.
3. Sociopolitical Consciousness:
 - a. Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS) Training: Increases understanding of systemic and institutional barriers that students may face, promoting sociopolitical consciousness.
 - b. Critical Discussion Forums: Provides safe spaces for students to engage in discussions on socio-political issues affecting the communities they serve.
 - c. Participation in Policy Advocacy: Enables students to address systemic issues by participating in advocacy efforts related to education and mental health policies.
 - d. Community Engagement Programs: Engages students directly with the communities they serve, providing firsthand experience of societal dynamics and challenges.

The training model will emphasize an ongoing reflection on cultural relevance, allowing the scholars to continuously assess and refine their practices to meet the changing needs of their students. This could be achieved through regular seminars or group discussions where scholars can share their experiences and learn from each other.

This comprehensive approach to culturally relevant pedagogy will ensure that scholars are prepared to support student success in a diverse and ever-changing educational landscape. By embedding these principles into the Ujima School Counseling Program, we can help ensure that the mental health services provided in the participating LEAs are effective, inclusive, and culturally relevant.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African American children*. Jossey-Bass.