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Patricia A. Hershfeldt  
Richard Sechrest  
Karen L. Pell  
Michael S. Rosenberg  
Catherine P. Bradshaw  
Philip J. Leaf

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## Abstract

Despite years of investigation and reporting on the disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in office discipline referrals and special education, little progress has been made in reducing these disparities. It is recommended that school personnel identify cultural inconsistencies in disciplinary practices, and develop and maintain culturally responsive practices that facilitate improvements in student behavior. The Double-Check framework promotes such practices through self-assessment, and encourages school personnel to recognize their own attitudes and behaviors toward CLD students. In this effort we describe the five components of the Double-Check model and provide a case study example that illustrates how school teams and individual teachers can apply the framework when encountering persistent behavior problems.

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## Keywords

Cultural responsiveness, student behavior, teacher self-assessment, professional development, culturally linguistically diverse

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Despite decades of national attention, disproportionate representation of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students in special education programs is still prevalent (Kewal Ramani et al., 2007). Disproportionately high rates of office disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and behaviorally-based special education referrals for these students signify a need to address cultural factors as possible antecedents of presenting problem behaviors (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Skiba et al., 2008). The need to consider cultural responsiveness in the classroom as a potential trigger for student behaviors is both timely and urgent. Despite years of efforts to eliminate disproportionate representation of CLD students among behavioral and special education referrals, there has been little improvement (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Skiba et al., 2008). This is particularly troublesome given that our nation's schools are becoming increasingly culturally diverse (Klinger et al., 2005; Smith, 2003; U.S. Department of Commerce, 2000).

Some researchers (e.g., Trent, Kea, & Oh, 2008) contend that teachers are not adequately prepared to manage behaviors that may be culturally different from their own. Yet culturally responsive behavioral interventions that are implemented correctly can be effective in managing classroom disruptions (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Klinger et al., 2005). Therefore, these interventions hold great potential to serve as preventative measures, given that a majority of teachers in the workforce today are white, middle class, and female. In fact, nationally, 9% of K-12 public school teachers are adults of color, whereas 40% of students are children of color (Jorgenson, 2001). It has been argued that white teachers' interpretations of behaviors exhibited by CLD students may not align with their

own definition of what is acceptable (Klinger et al., 2005). For example, White teachers unfamiliar with the communication styles of African American males have interpreted interactions as argumentative, when in fact the students' behaviors were intended to be a passionate response (Townsend, 2000). This particular type of misinterpretation is significant because behavior is one of the most common reasons for referral to special education (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

Disproportionality is also evident in the inequity of office discipline referrals, suspensions, and expulsions in elementary and middle schools. Through analyses of a national database that included discipline data from the 2005-2006 school year, representing 180,670 students with 372,642 office discipline referrals, Skiba et al. (2008) found significant differences among suspension rates of African American, Latino, and White students. Specifically, African American elementary school students were 2.65 times more likely than white students to receive an out of school suspension for a minor discipline in-

**“Latino students of the same age were 4.68 times more likely than white students to receive an out of school suspension for a minor discipline infraction.”**

fraction (e.g., disrespect, work refusal, classroom disruption). Additionally, Latino students of the same age were 4.68 times more likely than white students to receive a suspension for a minor offense. Furthermore, a recent study found that African American students are more likely than their White counterparts to receive an office discipline referral,

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even after statistically controlling for the teacher's rating of the student's disruptive behavior problems (Bradshaw, Mitchell, O'Brennan, & Leaf, in press).

Those advocating for culturally responsive practices point out that change must be systemic and happen at federal, state, district, and school levels (Abrams & Gibbs, 2000; Klinger et al., 2005). However, the development of culturally responsive classrooms requires that principals and teachers serve as agents of change. Teachers in particular, given the extensive amount of time spent with students, are integral in adopting practices that support cultural diversity. An important step in effecting change happens through professional development that incorporates self-awareness activities and reflection, as well as invitations for on-going discussions about diversity and how culture impacts instruction and management of the classroom (Beauboeuf-Lafontant, 1999; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Skiba et al., 2008; Townsend, 2000).

**“Teachers, given the extensive amount of time spent with students are integral in adopting practices that support cultural diversity.”**

Fortunately, a considerable amount of work has illustrated how culturally responsive pedagogy and behavior management can be integrated into school and classrooms practices (see, for example, Gay, 2002; King, Harris-Murri, & Artiles, 2006; Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2007; Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). The Double-Check model, developed by Rosenberg (2007), provides opportunities for teachers to reflect on five core components of culturally responsive practices. The self-

reflection process is facilitated through completion of a checklist which helps to increase awareness of one's own cultural sensitivities. With this heightened awareness, teachers and others in the classroom can understand student behavior in a more functional way. This in turn will help teachers engage in more comprehensive intervention planning and provide supports for problematic student behaviors, rather than punishing and excluding students because of their behaviors. Until teachers recognize and assess how their own culture affects behavior in today's society, they are unlikely to employ effective behavior management strategies in their classrooms (Green, 2008). In the sections below, we describe the Double-Check framework and illustrate how it can help school personnel to interpret their own behavior when faced with problematic behaviors from CLD students. The five components of Double-Check are highlighted and followed by case study applications of the Double-Check framework.

For the purpose of this paper we define culture as the beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular group of people (inclusive of age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, disability or sexual preference). While we recognize that culture has theoretical constructs that can be debated, the goal of this paper is to promote the process of teacher self-reflection by defining culture operationally. We view culture as more complex than race, gender and socioeconomic status. For teachers to understand culture more broadly, it is imperative that they view their own culture and how it affects their perceptions and decisions about behavior. The aim of this paper is to provide a framework for teachers to assess their understanding of behavior with a greater sensitivity to culture—their own, their students, and the interactions among them in the classroom.

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## Five Components of Double-Check

### *Reflective Thinking about Children and “Group Membership”*

It is imperative that teachers and school personnel engage in reflective thinking about their own cultural group membership, as well as the cultural group membership of their students. Indicators of such thinking include (a) understanding the concept of culture and why it is important; (b) being aware of one’s own and other’s group memberships and histories; (c) considering how past and current circumstances contribute to presenting behaviors; (d) examining one’s own attitudes and biases, and seeing how they impact relationships with students; (e) articulating positive and constructive views of difference; and (f) making tangible efforts to reach out and understand differences (Richards et al., 2007; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

In order to become culturally responsive, teachers must critically reflect on their own instructional practices, interactions, and personal reactions to students and behaviors (Howard, 2003). Self-reflection provides teachers with insights into the dynamic role they play in their students’ lives and the connections they make to further impact learning. Teachers who engage in self-reflection are more likely to try new strategies that match the needs of their students (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Gay, 2000, 2002).

Townsend (2000) described one perception sometimes held by African American adolescents. Aligning oneself with the dominant school culture by conforming to school-wide expectations is not acceptable among some African American peer groups. Thus, some students may begin to display defiant behaviors to demonstrate non-compliance with the dominant school culture—a circumstance easily misunderstood by many educa-

tors. However, a teacher who is aware of this might attempt to ameliorate this situation by providing students with opportunities to adhere to school-wide expectations while making allowances for the peer pressure. Examples of such strategies would include providing the students a set of textbooks to leave at home so they are not faced with the negative attention associated with carrying books home, a behavior associated with conformity. An informed teacher might also provide private ways to reinforce students for desired behaviors that do not call attention to the student in front of his or her peer group. Collecting school work in more discrete ways and measuring learning by oral or portfolio methods may allow a student to demonstrate proficiency without appearing to peers as conforming.

### *An Authentic Relationship*

The second area is the formation of an authentic relationship between the teacher and the student. As noted earlier, there are data that suggest that positive relationships between students and teachers are associated with fewer behavior problems (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Murray & Greenberg, 2001; McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002). Indicators of a teacher’s initiating and sustaining positive relationships include (a) tangible evidence of warmth, caring, and trust; (b) evidence of positive attention directed toward the student (e.g., recognizing special talents, encouragement during lessons, and the provision of emotional support); (c) instances of interest and participation in the student’s activities and personal life; (d) truly listening to the student rather than just reacting to overt behavior; and (e) sensitivity to the referred student’s situational messages and recognizing that setting events (e.g., health factors, neighborhood expectations, and the need to

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save face) influence behavior (Koenig, 2000; Monroe, 2006).

Teachers who demonstrate respect and care for students can have a significant impact on students' behavior, both in school and out of school (McNeely et al., 2002). Students who are often marginalized by their peers or other adults can be responsive to teachers who take a genuine interest in them. Caring teachers demonstrate a genuine interest in not just the academic needs of their students, but also in their social and emotional well-being (Brown, 2003; Gay, 2000, 2002). Teachers who positively support student persistence, efforts, and accomplishments find that their students take pride in their work and have a vision about their future (Ladson-Billings, 1994). Additionally, when teachers have an authentic relationship with a student, they are better able to plan interventions to support learning which aligns rather than conflict with the individual's culture.

### *Effective Communication*

**“Some students have distinctive communication styles that do not conform to typical norms and expectations.”**

According to Day-Vines and Day-Hairston (2005), some students have distinctive communication styles that do not conform to typical norms and expectations. Consequently, behavior referrals of such students may be more a function of cultural misunderstandings than discipline problems in need of specialized, labor intensive interventions. Indicators of a culturally responsive communication style among educators include (a) understanding the communicative function of the student's different types of behavior; (b) consistent evidence of interactions that reflect

professionalism, credibility, civility, and respect; (c) limited judgmental verbal interactions directed toward the student; and (d) recognition and facility with code-switching, the notion that the referred student may fail to recognize that different contexts require different standards of behavior (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Gay, 2002; Richards et al., 2007).

Behavior is the strongest form of communication. In order to enhance communication, teachers are encouraged to learn about each child's heritage and language (Weinstein et al., 2004), ask questions to aid understanding (Cartledge & Lo, 2006), infuse the classroom with stories, warmth, humor (Gay, 2000), and honor expression (Hinton-Johnson, 2005). Also it is important to embrace the notion that *one size does not fit all* (Banks et al., 2005). Individualizing relationships and modes of communication with each child is important for building trust and promoting learning.

### *Connection to Curriculum*

Connecting the curricula to students' cultures requires teachers to integrate exemplars from the students' background into lessons. In doing so, teachers must be cautious to minimize instances of ethnic stereotyping that could serve to marginalize students. Visible images of cultural value should be displayed in the classroom environment and learning activities should be selected that are relevant to the students' background, cognitive styles, family, and community. These images and related activities should be valued and incorporated into daily routines. Finally, it is important that the prevailing attitude in the school and classroom is one that reflects unity of teacher and student in the goal of mastering the material (Gay, 2002; McIntyre, 1996; Ross, Kamman, & Coady, 2008). Spe-

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cifically, teachers and students are partners in learning, and mastery of the curriculum content is their shared goal.

The merit of connecting curriculum to the cultural background of the student is well illustrated through the Kamehameha Elementary Education Program (KEEP) (Au, 1980; Au & Mason, 1981). Once students in this Hawaiian elementary school were provided reading passages that matched their cultural style of conversation, reading performance improved significantly. A similar example involved incorporating the popular Hispanic folk tale “La Llorona,” the weeping woman, into reading instruction (Leavell & Ramos-Machail, 2000). The tale has numerous renditions, each one slightly different, which evolves from a tale of traditional values and lessons to one that has been transcribed to match contemporary conditions. By using folk tales as part of the curriculum, students not only experience the cultural aspects illustrated by the tale, but explore the evolution of the story through modern times.

Integrating culture into the curriculum should not be a one time occurrence. While featuring one culture during a particular month certainly directs attention to that culture, attention should not be restricted to a particular time of year. Rather, the value of culture should permeate the curriculum at all times and represent all students within the class. Personalizing, story telling and honoring differences should be evident every day across every subject.

### *Sensitivity to Student’s Cultural and Situational Messages*

Recognizing that students from CLD backgrounds may have different behaviors helps teachers to respond in culturally responsive ways. Making connections with students’  
*Figure 1.*

cultural community and family not only communicates a genuine interest and desire to understand, but also has proven effective in the prevention of behavioral infractions. For example, Epstein and Sheldon (2002) found as family and community involvement increases, discipline referrals for students decreases. When families are included in classroom activities, teachers report a broadening of their own understanding of culture, and, consequently, a richer understanding of their students (Tucker et al., 2005).

**“From the students’ perspective, there may be an inability to fully comprehend the culture of their school given the vast differences they experience at home and in the community.”**

Clearly, cultural and situational messages play a significant role in student behavior. From the students’ perspective, there may be an inability to fully comprehend the culture of their school, given the vast differences they experience at home and in their community. Such misunderstanding can lead to behaviors that run counter to both the implicit and explicit standards of the school and classroom (Cartledge & Kourea, 2008; Monroe, 2005). In some cases, cultural and situational messages can be illustrated through the differentiation of social skills instruction. However, it is critical to be sensitive to how skills being taught are understood (Cartledge, Singh, & Gibson, 2008). Specifically, teachers need to help students recognize the need to find alternative ways to manage behaviors.

### Double-Check Self-Assessment

Take a moment to review each element below. Rate yourself on each one, assessing how comfortable you are with understanding the element and the ease and effectiveness with which you apply it in your classroom and school.

| PROGRAM COMPONENTS<br>AND INDICATORS   | Evidence  |  |  |   |   |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|
|  | <i>4</i><br><i>Regularly in my<br/>class and school</i> | <i>3</i><br><i>Most of the<br/>time in my<br/>class and<br/>school</i> | <i>2</i><br><i>Rarely in my<br/>class and school</i> | <i>1</i><br><i>Never in my<br/>class and<br/>school</i> | <i>U</i><br><i>This does not<br/>apply to my<br/>class and<br/>school</i> |
| <b>Reflective Thinking About the Children and their “Group Membership”</b>   |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I understand culture and why it is so important.</i>  |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I reflect on how my actions contribute to chains of behavior</i>  |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I am aware of other groups and how histories and present circumstances contribute to my behavior interacting with others</i>  |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I make tangible efforts (reading, home visits, interviews, student inventories) to “reach out” and understand differences</i> |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I have positive and constructive views of difference</i>  |   |  |  |   |   |
| <b>Efforts Made to Develop An Authentic Relationship</b>   |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I display tangible evidence of warmth, care and trust</i>   |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I recognize special talents</i>   |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I encourage positive interactions</i>   |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I provide positive adult attention</i>  |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I take genuine interest in the activities and personal lives of others</i>  |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I display a professional and personal orientation toward students</i>   |   |  |  |   |   |
| <b>Effective Communication</b>   |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I consistently communicate high expectations</i>  |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I display professionalism, civility, and respect in all my communications</i>   |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I communicate with care and persistence of effort</i>   |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I communicate with credibility, dependability, and assertiveness</i>  |   |  |  |   |   |
| <i>I communicate without judging others</i>  |   |  |  |   |   |



| PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND INDICATORS  | Evidence                                     |   |   |  |  |
|--|--|---|---|--|--|
|  | 4<br><i>Regularly in my class and school</i> | 3<br><i>Most of the time in my class and school</i> | 2<br><i>Rarely in my class and school</i> | 1<br><i>Never in my class and school</i> | U<br><i>This does not apply to my class and school</i> |
| <i>I am aware and facile with “code switching”</i>   |  |   |   |  |  |
| <b>Connection to Curriculum</b>  |  |   |   |  |  |
| <i>My instruction contains exemplars from the backgrounds of my students</i>                                     |  |   |   |  |  |
| <i>I highlight cultural differences positively during instruction</i>  |  |   |   |  |  |
| <i>I use learning activities reflective of the background of my students, their families, and the community</i>  |  |   |   |  |  |
| <i>I consider cognitive style differences</i>  |  |   |   |  |  |
| <i>I understand and apply the concept of teacher and student vs. the content</i>                                 |  |   |   |  |  |
| <b>Sensitivity To Student’s Cultural and Situational Messages</b>  |  |   |   |  |  |
| <i>I am aware of how situations influence behavior (e.g., health, poverty, dress, neighborhood expectations)</i> |  |   |   |  |  |
| <i>I am aware of the students’ needs to address multiple constituencies</i>                                      |  |   |   |  |  |
| <i>I emphasize resiliency, choice, and internal locus of control</i>   |  |   |   |  |  |
| <i>I recognize students’ social and political consciousness</i>  |  |   |   |  |  |

***When you have completed the rating scale, review the areas that you ranked below a four. Those rated a ‘3’ may require additional practice. Those rated a ‘2’ or a ‘1’ may require instruction and practice. After you have completed the scale, take a moment to prioritize the areas in which you would like resources and assistance.***

***I would like additional training and resources in the following areas:***

***I would like to practice (role plays, coaching, etc) in the following areas:***

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## The Double-Check Self-Assessment Tool

The Double-Check Self-Assessment Tool (see Figure 1) reflects the five components of cultural responsiveness discussed above. The items are framed as statements that ask the teacher and other school staff personnel to consider their thoughts and actions around each component. There are statements about group membership for themselves and those in their classroom, how they establish

and maintain authentic relationships, how they communicate with those of different cultures, how culture is integrated into the curriculum, and their awareness and sensitivity to cultural and situational messages. Terminology can sometimes be interpreted differently so along with the self assessment tool is a list of terms with definitions (see Figure 2).

Figure 2.

### ***Terms used on self-assessment***

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <i>Code switching</i>   | The phenomenon of switching from one language to another in the same discourse (Botzapel, 2003)  |
| <i>Culture</i>          | Collectively, the beliefs, customs, practices, and social behavior of a particular group of people (inclusive of age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, disability or sexual preference) |
| <i>Group membership</i> | Identifying social groups by age, gender, race, ethnicity, culture, disability or sexual preference  |

For best results, the assessment should be completed anonymously and confidentially by classroom teachers, paraprofessionals, and, when appropriate, school administrators. The teacher or staff member rates each response on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*Never in my class*) to 4 (*Regularly in my class*). As a self report, each item is answered individually and interpreted similarly. Results profile where teachers and staff have confidence that these components are in place in their classroom or where they are not. The final two open-ended items ask for areas where training or resources are requested, as well as practice using role plays.

The assessment tool is designed to heighten teacher and staff awareness, as well as to spark conversations among school personnel about culturally responsive practices.

It can also serve as a building level needs assessment measure to analyze and distill common themes around the issue of culture. For school leaders, these results may identify potential topics for conversations at faculty meetings and serve as content areas for ongoing professional development.

### Application of Double-Check

The following case study illustrates application of the Double-Check framework. It highlights how a teacher with support from the student support team, applied the five components of the process in her classroom.

Reggie, a student in a suburban elementary school, exhibited behavioral difficulty and social compatibility issues with his new classmates. He and his family emigrated to the U.S. from a West African country and

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Reggie frequently had difficulty keeping his hands to himself, tended to converse with classmates in close proximity, had difficulty remaining in his seat and, on a few occasions, simply left the classroom. Reggie's teacher described him as being a "very intelligent child" and indicated that she was very impressed with his ability to "think outside the box." She reported that she often enjoyed his frequent commentary on classroom topics. The teacher observed that Reggie tended to complete work in his own way, often responding with highly technical answers to much simpler questions. For example, when answering a test question asking "How does rain form?" Reggie did not respond to the original question, but shifted the discussion to how clouds are seeded to manufacture rain. Although Reggie's teacher accepted such responses, she was concerned about his adherence to a given assignment and concerned about his ability to complete acceptable work for others. There was also concern about Reggie's ability to continue to achieve academically given his difficulties remaining seated in class and his pattern of leaving class.

*Reflective thinking about group membership.* Reggie's teacher did not know about many of Reggie's past cultural experiences. Thus, her ability to understand the impact of cultural events was limited. Reggie's parents were confused by the teacher's reports of behavioral problems at school and stated that they had never received previous reports of similar problems. The school administrators, aware of the potential of cultural factors influencing the perceptions of the parents and the teacher, arranged for a meeting. The parties, along with school counselors, considered the roles of Reggie's former cultural group and setting, and discussed how they might have contributed to the presenting behaviors.

These discussions revealed that Reggie's and his family's school experiences in West Africa included a less structured mode of instruction. Class was held outdoors frequently and not in a formal classroom setting. Moreover, lessons often were conducted through open, class-wide discussions.

**"Reggie's parents were confused by the teacher's reports of behavioral problems at school and stated that they had never received previous reports of similar problems."**

Reggie's tendency to remain in close physical contact with peers during conversations was viewed as typical in his former setting. Reggie's teacher, made aware of these culturally based differences, altered her perception of the presenting behaviors. Rather than being viewed as behavior problems, these responses were seen as a function of a different educational history. This new perspective allowed, and in many ways encouraged, the teacher to make modifications to her teaching methods that better accounted for cultural differences among herself, Reggie, and his classmates.

*Authentic relationship.* From the beginning, the teacher considered Reggie bright and creative. She enjoyed his frequent commentary on classroom topics. Although she initially suspected that his misbehaviors likely stemmed from undiagnosed ADHD, she made repeated efforts to reinforce positively Reggie's desired in-class behaviors, seeking to decrease the frequency and rate of undesired behaviors. Her discussions with Reggie's parents and her colleagues prompted consideration that the behaviors she observed and interpreted as signs of ADHD might instead be

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the result of cultural-based characteristics of the student. The teacher reported that she made more concerted efforts to engage Reggie in brief discussions before and after class. The discussions were an attempt at fostering an authentic and personal relationship. Reggie's teacher also increased communication with Reggie's parents. Her discussions with parents included more specific questions about Reggie's behavior targeting cultural aspects as contributing factors. The teacher reported that the discussions with Reggie and increased communication with his parents left her feeling more skilled in supporting Reggie's learning needs and behavior. She also found that she was more aware of cultural factors with other students in her class

The increased interactions communicated to the student that his teacher was interested in his thoughts and valued him as a person. The brief private discussions were not limited to school-related topics and included social topics such as the weather and Reggie's participation in youth sports. The planned discussions not only promoted the authentic relationship but modeled the conversation style and content typical for a school-based relationship. The teacher was actually providing individualized social skill instruction in effective communication.

**“The teacher learned that close physical proximity to another was valued by his West African culture.”**

*Effective communication.* To ensure that all students understood spoken instruction, Reggie's teacher often modeled academic lessons and behavioral expectations to her class. She also made a point to periodically 'check-in' with Reggie and other stu-

dents needing the same support. She used frequent verbal and visual cues to be sure that the identified students understood the content as well as the expectations for that particular lesson and setting. The teacher taught Reggie to communicate understanding or confusion through contact. The teacher felt this was instrumental in helping her recognize when Reggie did not understand the material or expectation. Reggie was also given an opportunity to communicate his thoughts and ideas to his teacher and parents through daily journal entries which the teacher read, responded to, and sent home weekly in a home folder. From the discussion with Reggie's parents the teacher learned that close physical proximity when speaking to another was valued by his West African culture. She made efforts to be in close physical proximity when communicating with Reggie, particularly when she was checking for understanding of new and complex tasks. In addition, she taught her class about proximity to others, showing how different cultures interpret the distances. Reggie learned these differences along with his fellow students and because he wanted to fit in, he began positioning himself appropriate distances from the other children.

*Connection to curriculum.* Reggie's teacher commented that he tended to complete the work in his own way, often responding with highly technical answers to much simpler questions. Reggie's teacher interpreted his work as containing more of a philosophical approach. Although it was more difficult to grade because it included extended or divergent styles of response, she readily accepted Reggie's non-standard approach. She was, however, concerned that Reggie's unique style of responding might not be acceptable to other teachers. She was also concerned that Reggie's non-traditional responses

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would not be acceptable on state mandated standardized tests. To address these concerns she incorporated a class-wide discussion that included her expectations, the range of acceptable student responses, and provided multiple exemplars of student work every time she assigned a new project or task. The teacher also incorporated several teaching methods from his former culture such as the integration of Socratic dialogue and occasional teaching of lessons outdoors or in less formal settings.

**“It is important to note, however, that cultural behavior patterns can also manifest through internalizing behavior. The same framework would be applied to interpret internalized behaviors.”**

*Sensitivity to student’s cultural and situational messages.* The teacher learned that Reggie’s comments in class, which she previously found disruptive and even annoying, were beneficial to him as well as to other members of the class. The teacher was able to embrace Reggie’s input as valuable because she had enhanced her understanding of the cultural influence of the behavior. As her cultural awareness increased, the teacher tried to provide time for such comments from the whole class immediately following the task instructions, and just prior to task initiation. Although brief, this period provided all students in the class an opportunity to share questions and ideas and promoted a positive class climate. This teaching style was similar to Reggie’s former school setting and promoted a more collegial interaction among Reggie and his classmates. It also allowed the teacher to comply with curriculum requirements. Finally, continued communication

with Reggie’s parents provided all stakeholders with invaluable insights about how they could work cooperatively and effectively to maintain academic and behavioral success.

This case study provides an example for use with a student who is exhibiting externalized behavior problems. It is important to note, however, that cultural behavior patterns can also manifest through internalizing behaviors. The same framework would be applied to interpret the behaviors of a student with internalized behavior problems. For example, a teacher would still want to think reflectively about that student’s group membership, develop an authentic relationship with the student, communicate effectively, and present curriculum that is a cultural match.

#### Limitations

The Double-Check framework was developed using evidence-based components from the literature addressing culturally responsive teaching. Although a limitation of the current study is the lack of empirical data documenting its impact on disproportionality, the framework is currently being pilot tested. Specifically, we are using the self-assessment to guide the provision of professional development in multiple elementary schools implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Preliminary findings from the pilot study suggest the feasibility of the Double-Check process, and the use of the self-assessment for assessing teacher attitudes and awareness of the impact of culture on student behavior. Additional research on the impact of the Double-Check process on disproportionality in student discipline data and special education outcomes is currently underway.

#### Conclusion

Problem behaviors among students are often a function of a lack of correspondence

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between the mainstream expectations for student behavior and the diverse cultural orientations students bring to their school environments. Unfortunately, some educators have difficulty recognizing and discussing cultural diversity, as well as exploring how these differences influence classroom interactions (Gay, 2002; Greenman & Kimmel, 1995; Vavrus, 2002). In some cases, teachers have only a superficial knowledge of their students' cultural backgrounds and values. Consequently, there can be a high risk that the intent of certain behaviors are misinterpreted and misjudged. In other situations, teachers may simply be unaware of how to improve their culturally responsiveness.

In this article we have presented Double-Check, a framework that allows school personnel to self-assess potential cultural responsive disconnects in the classroom. By using the Double Check Self Assessment, teachers individually or collectively can review the five research-based components and reflect on their own behavior in their classrooms. With this heightened awareness, teachers can reinforce these components to establish and build upon relationships with their students that are authentic, that attend to situational messages, and ultimately that establish more effective communication and that promote learning by linking elements of culture to teaching concepts. Based on the available literature awareness is the first step in making real changes towards the incorporation of culturally responsive practices (Green, 2008; Skiba et al., 2008). Double-Check can create a forum for school personnel to assess and learn how to broaden their understanding of cultures and explore ways to incorporate differing cultures effectively in their classrooms.

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#### About the Authors:

**Dr. Patricia A. Hershfeldt** is a PBIS Plus Liaison for the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and a Faculty Associate in the Department of Special Education at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD.

**Dr. Richard Sechrest** is a PBIS Plus Liaison for the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, in clinical private practice at Suburban Psychology in Columbia, MD, and an affiliate professor at Loyola University in MD.

**Dr. Karen L. Pell** is a PBIS Plus Liaison for the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Principal of VIA Consulting in Columbia, MD.

**Dr. Michael S. Rosenberg** is the Associate Dean for Research and Professor in the Department of Special Education at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD.

**Dr. Catherine P. Bradshaw** is Assistant Professor in the Department of Mental Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Associate Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence in Baltimore, MD.

**Dr. Phillip J. Leaf** is a Professor in the Department of Mental Health at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for the Prevention of Youth Violence in