

Developing Educator Cultural Awareness through Critically Reflective Professional Learning Community Collaboration

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Abstract : Developing teachers' cultural awareness ensures schools are culturally responsive and socially just for diverse and exceptional students. An ideology of 'normal' exists in schools, creating boundaries where some students belong and others are marginalized based on difference. It is important that teacher preparation work to create democratic classrooms where teachers foster tolerance of difference and promote critical thinking and social justice. This paper outlines a framework for developing educator cultural awareness through the use of critically reflective professional learning communities (PLCs) drawing from the research on teacher critical reflection, collaborative PLCs, and Engeström's theory of expansive learning. A case study using the framework was conducted with ten practicing teachers. Participants read and reflected on critical literature to make visible unexamined beliefs, engaged in conversations that pushed them to reflect more deeply and project forward new ideas, and set goals for acting as agents of change in their schools.

Keywords : cultural and linguistic diversity, diversity, special education, teacher beliefs

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