

# Solution Tree | Press

## **Cultural Literacy for the Common Core: Six Steps to Powerful, Practical Instruction for All Learners**

*By Bonnie M. Davis*

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### **Study Guide**

This study guide is a companion to the book *Cultural Literacy for the Common Core: Six Steps to Powerful, Practical Instruction for All Learners* by Bonnie M. Davis. *Cultural Literacy for the Common Core* helps teachers rekindle their passion, reconnect with their history, and develop their ability to become learners themselves so that they can inspire deep, thoughtful, unbiased thinking in their students as they engage in rigorous, complex learning as outlined in the Common Core State Standards—with the ultimate goal of becoming successful global citizens.

This guide is arranged by chapter, enabling readers to either work their way through the entire book or to focus on the specific topics addressed in a particular chapter. It can be used by individual teachers, but it is ideal for school teams so they can make consistent, positive changes across grades and curriculum.

We thank you for your interest in this book, and we hope this guide is a useful tool in your efforts to create a healthy culture in your school or district.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Build Teacher-Student Relationships by Honoring Visibility and Voice**

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1. How would you describe *affective tone*? From your personal experience, can you identify a behavior a teacher displayed toward a student he or she perceived as being low-achieving? How did this behavior impact the student or the tone of the classroom?
2. If you carried out the check-in procedure with students in your school or district, what possible check-in questions provided on pages 22–23 would you ask? Why would you ask these questions? Write your own question that could be added to the sample check-in questions.
3. What are the *final five*? How would putting the final five into practice benefit teachers and students in your school or district?
4. What are some normalized expectations that you think are most prevalent in your school or district? In your opinion, what could be done to make people aware of these preconceived expectations and to improve cultural literacy?
5. What did you learn from Regina Gleason’s action-research project that could help you interact with students and develop a more positive learning environment?

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6. Discuss strategies you could use to learn from students' families and tap into their voices in your school or district.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Work and Plan Together Through Collaborative Conversations**

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1. Define *fierce conversation* in your own words. Can you recall a time when you've had a fierce conversation regarding your school? What happened?
2. Why may a book study be an effective tool for group learning among staff? In what ways have staff in your school or district taken part in group learning?
3. Can you recall an experience in which you have experienced or witnessed the unique position that white women have in the social order? What did you learn from it?
4. Why do you think teachers in your school or district would be happy or hesitant to start doing walkthroughs?
5. Do you think that teachers in your school or district have a big-picture outlook in education? If not, what impact do you think adopting a big-picture outlook in education could have?

## **Chapter 3**

### **Use High-Yield, Research-Based Strategies**

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1. Have you ever seen people in your school or district attempt to use *techniquey* tactics to create real change that failed? Why didn't these tactics work? What further action was taken to create the change that was sought?
2. Jane Pollock encourages teachers to move their focus from teaching to learning. What practices does your school or district have in place to help create master learners?
3. Why is goal setting an important strategy for teachers to apply? How has goal setting been used in your school and district, and how has it affected learning and teaching among students and teachers?
4. Why should teachers prevent themselves from jumping in with immediate aid when students have questions about a problem in order to encourage the students to take time to work through it?
5. What is the difference between *fixed mindset* and *growth mindset*? Why is it particularly significant to teach minority and lower achieving students about mindset?

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6. What is a strategy you have found helpful for teaching students about academic language so that they understand vocabulary that appears in their textbooks and tests?
  
7. What lesson can you take away from Christina Steffen's experience observing a class given in Arabic, a language she did not understand, and apply to your school or district?
  
8. Which of the teaching strategies that students in the Student Six project named their top six are most prevalent in your school or district? Which would you like to play a greater role and why?
  
9. Consider the examples provided on pages 79–80 that show how educators can incorporate novelty into lesson delivery. Write down your own idea for integrating novelty into a classroom.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Engage Students in Standards-Based Lessons**

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1. Why is it important for teachers to help learners retain the big ideas of a lesson after learners forget the lesson's facts?
2. In Marilyn Woodard's elementary school lesson, what understanding do teachers help students gain from students writing about their own bodies? How does this lesson create a feeling of community in the classroom?
3. Marcus Edwards teaches his middle school students about critical thinking through public speaking. What is a lesson that you've discovered to be helpful for students to learn about critical thinking?
4. In your own words, state the big idea about architecture taught by Christina Steffen in her high school lesson.
5. After reviewing Nancy Saguto's cultural literacy lesson about slavery, what is another topic that you think could easily be expanded from a short unit to a semester-long unit of study? Why do you think this would be a good topic to cover to explore people's perceptions of the topic through culturally responsive teaching strategies?

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6. What are *text sets*, and why may they be helpful in working with the aims of CCSS? How can text sets play a part in forming independent learners?



## **Chapter 5**

### **Use Feedback to Self-Assess Learning**

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1. What would you list as important features of a 21st century classroom environment?
2. Why may teachers need to differ their methods of feedback for students from individualistic cultures and students from collectivist cultures?
3. Review the questions that Tiffany Holliday says her students should be capable of answering daily, found on page 130. Are the students in your school or district prepared to answer these questions? What would you change about the learning environment to incorporate these questions into lessons?
4. Consider a lesson that is currently part of your school or district's curriculum, and use the connect-it strategy to form connections for how the lesson relates to your students' lives and cultures, as you would ask the students to do with the connect-it strategy. In what ways can the material connect to your students' lives?
5. Reflect on how Elizabeth Hanson worked toward closing the gap between her identity as a teacher at Thomas Edison High School and her identity at South High School. Have you ever experienced a transitory period in which you changed schools and your identity

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changed with the new surroundings and people? If so, what did you do to adjust to the new school or district environment?

6. Write down something Stephen Ledbetter, Kristi Davis, or Christina Steffen discovered about feedback that you find helpful or surprising.
  
7. What is a question you think would be helpful to ask students at the end of a unit of assessment to gather feedback on the unit's success?

## **Chapter 6**

### **Engage in a Cultural Literacy Journey**

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1. Examine the questions about personal bias on page 159. In reviewing these questions, what personal biases did you discover about yourself?
2. Think of a time when a student said something hurtful to another student and was asked to apologize. In this situation, how would the *ouch rule* described by Graig Meyer have been helpful?
3. How can white teachers name their whiteness to their students? Why is it beneficial for teachers to acknowledge their whiteness among their students?
4. What happened in North Glendale Elementary School's book study once small groups were established? How is small-group work incorporated into lessons in your school or district? Have you found that students in your school or district have had similar opinions of small-group work?
5. Name one thing that Damian Pritchard says worked with his school's cultural journey with the staff and one thing that didn't work along this journey. Following these

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observations, what advice does he give for staff at other schools embarking on a cultural journey?

6. Briefly describe what Jennifer Strausser's school district planned that turned out to be a powerful professional development activity. What do you think could be done in your school or district to encourage professional development of this magnitude?