



# Designing Systems to Support Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

## Three Local Unions' Journeys

*A Partnership of the American Federation of Teachers and the Schlechty Center*



*A Union of Professionals*





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### **Our Mission**

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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# Introduction and Structure of the Partnership

Since the culmination of AFT's 2021 Center for School Improvement Leadership Institute (CSI), the AFT and the Schlechty Center<sup>1</sup> have been working with three local unions and their members to determine how the content and topics of AFT's 2021 CSI can be used to leverage social justice work underway now and to design, develop and implement culturally responsive systems. Through a customized approach, such support met unions and union leaders where they are in their work, while building sustainable systems that engage union members, administrators, school boards, students, families and school communities.

Center for School Improvement teams include:

- [St. Croix Education Association, Stillwater, Minn.](#)<sup>2</sup>
- [North Bergen Federation of Teachers, North Bergen, N.J.](#)<sup>3</sup>
- [Curtis High School, New York City \(United Federation of Teachers\)](#)<sup>4</sup>

Through partnership, this guide recounts the journey of these three unions to design, develop, and implement culturally responsive systems throughout their school communities. Schlechty Center consultant Monica Solomon designed and facilitated a customized approach with union leaders that included process agendas, planning guides, surveys, sharing protocols, interview protocols, and systems for tracking progress. Examples of these collaborative tools and resources are provided throughout this guide.

This partnership started shortly after AFT's CSI 2021 Institute (April 2021) to capture the energy and momentum of the union leaders' newly acquired knowledge and skills. While each journey is unique and customized based on the needs and interests of each local, these leaders used a common process for continuity. Each union, the AFT and the Schlechty Center jointly created project goals. These respective actors designed and facilitated to reflect a collaborative process with the intention of achieving established goals. They documented the results and shared them regularly with team members and those impacted by the work. As with most successful initiatives, union leaders were constantly thinking about sustainability, thereby adopting a future orientation connected to the union's role in leading social justice initiatives within their school communities.

One objective of the partnership was to create time and space for the three AFT affiliates to share and reflect together, developing and fostering a community of learners. Through dialogue, analysis and reflection, the goal of these sharing sessions is to promote collegiality and foster collaboration among and between unions to strengthen local efforts, and to capture and share lessons learned, products and narratives to benefit the broader AFT community. A sharing protocol was designed and provided in advance (see Appendix A).<sup>5</sup>

The structure of the work inspired action, union leaders report. "These are the right conversations and at the right time," says St. Croix Education Association President Josiah Hill. "Sharing ideas and progress with our sisters and brothers in different parts of the country has affirmed our work collectively."

<sup>1</sup> [www.schlechtycenter.org](http://www.schlechtycenter.org)

<sup>2</sup> [www.sceaunion.org](http://www.sceaunion.org)

<sup>3</sup> [www.nbft.org](http://www.nbft.org)

<sup>4</sup> [www.curtishs.org](http://www.curtishs.org)

<sup>5</sup> [www.tinyurl.com/2p885znt](http://www.tinyurl.com/2p885znt)

As a community of learners, union leaders gained a sense of camaraderie and enduring confidence. “Everyone in this sharing session is fearless,” says Leo Ospina from North Bergen. “We know that we will keep going; we have seen the progress as a team. Seeing more culturally responsive and restorative practices within our schools will support our students, and that’s why we are here.”

Each AFT affiliate organized this guide in the following categories:

- Establishing Project Goals
- Designing Processes for Achieving the Goals
- Realizing Intended Results
- Envisioning a Future Orientation

*“We are grateful to the AFT support in connecting with the Schlechty Center and Stillwater and Curtis High School. Our sharing sessions are helpful as we get ideas for furthering the work.”*

*-Carol Toomey, President, North Bergen Federation of Teachers (NBFT)*

# Frameworks That Inspire Action

While each local built on existing initiatives underway within their communities, several frameworks inspired these union leaders during AFT's CSI 2021 Institute and leveraged them throughout their journey, including:

- Images of School (Schlechty Center)
- Three Frames of Unionism (Consortium for Educational Change)
- Leading Cultural and Structural Change (Schlechty Center)
- The Characteristic of Schools Operating as Learning Organizations (Schlechty Center)

## Images of School

(see Appendix B)<sup>6</sup>

While the need for transformation is frequently mentioned in education today, there is little clarity about what it means, why it is needed, or how to lead it. The Images of School chart, created by Dr. Phillip C. Schlechty (*Leading for Learning: How to Transform Schools into Learning Organization*, 2009), was particularly useful to CSI teams in illustrating the need for transformation in a system focused on culturally responsive pedagogy. Union leaders used the Images of School chart with various audiences to promote dialogue and analysis, which provided valuable information to enhance the capacity of their organizations to support and sustain needed changes through strategic action.

Schlechty Center associate Monica Solomon made available suggestions and activities for using the chart with various audiences, provided in the following footnote (see Appendix C).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/5n797wv9>

<sup>7</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/ymc9k3dn>

## Three Frames of Unionism

The Three Frames of Unionism<sup>8</sup> (*Adapted from MITUL Cohort Draft 5.0, March 2011 by Consortium for Educational Change, May 2019*) was a central framework used during AFT's CSI 2021 virtual conference's **Beyond the Pandemic: Reimagining Schools for the Future** session. It became a unifying framework for the St. Croix Education Association, North Bergen Federation of Teachers, and Curtis High School as they proceeded with their CSI 2021 action plans. For example, North Bergen Federation of Teachers introduced the Three Frames of Unionism to their executive committee, asking them to review the definitions and make suggestions as to how to go about "constructing comprehensive unionism." In a virtual session with executive committee members, NBFT President Carol Toomey provided an overview, including her vision for how the framework could shape the union's direction relating to *social justice unionism*. Members reviewed the framework individually and then reflected on the following:

- Something that you found interesting about the Three Frames of Unionism;
- Something that affirmed your thinking about the role of the union;
- An area (industrial, professional, social justice) where the union fulfills its mission; and
- An idea within this framework where we could enhance our capacity as a union of professionals

Members broke into smaller teams through Zoom; and through facilitated conversations, interviewers asked group members to record on Google documents their suggestions and ideas on how to become a more comprehensive union.

<sup>8</sup> <http://turnweb.org/attachments/290/Organizing%20Through%20The%203%20Frames%20of%20Comprehensive%20Unionism%20April%202022.pdf>



## Integrating the Three Frames of Comprehensive Unionism



Jo Anderson Jr, Founding Executive Director of the Consortium for Educational Change, references the Three Frames of Unionism in an article for National TURN (Teacher Union Reform Network of AFT and NEA Locals and Partners), [A Vision for Comprehensive Unionism](#).

### Leading Cultural/Structural Change, Sandboxes or Beehives

As participants in the CSI 2021 session **Valuing Multiple Perspectives: Communication for an Inclusive Audience**, union leaders accessed additional Schlechty Center frameworks and resources, including [Leading Structural/Cultural Change](#) (see Appendix D)<sup>9</sup> and [Sandboxes or](#)

[Beehives](#) (see Appendix E).<sup>10</sup> Union leaders found these frameworks valuable in assessing, designing and sustaining systems to support labor-management relationships. For example, [Leading Structural/Cultural Change](#) provides educational leaders with a framework to collectively discuss what elements are in place within the district and/or schools—beliefs, vision, mission, incentives, resources and skills—to realize change, particularly as it relates to designing culturally responsive systems. [Sandboxes or Beehives](#) explicitly calls upon leaders to grapple with the difference between congeniality and collegiality and how and why the beehive metaphor represents ideal labor-management relationships.

<sup>9</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/5n92ufm5>

<sup>10</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/bde8wb3n>



## The Characteristics of Schools Operating as Learning Organizations

Teams were introduced to Dr. Schlechty's [Schools Operating as Learning Organizations](#) (see Appendix F)<sup>11</sup> during the 2021 CSI Institute. Locally and collectively, union leaders in North Bergen, Stillwater, and at Curtis High School demonstrated evidence of what it means to be a learning community, communities of learners, and a learning organization as defined by Schlechty:

- *A learning community*, as the term is used here, is a group of people who are bound together by the pursuit of shared questions, problems or issues.
- *Communities of learners* are collections of individuals joined together for the purpose of sharing a common learning experience but who are otherwise loosely affiliated.
- *Learning organizations* are complex social organizations that purposefully create, support and use learning communities as the primary means of inducting new members; creating, developing and importing knowledge; assigning tasks and evaluating performances; and establishing goals and maintaining direction.

Local unions, for example, operated as learning communities in that they had clear norms and procedures and honored ideas of mutualism, collegiality, trust, loyalty and friendship. Collectively, the three unions joined together for the purpose of sharing common learning experiences, as well as addressing shared challenges, issues and questions. Each union strives for strong labor-management partnerships with aspirations to become learning organizations with the following characteristics:

- *Power* is diffuse throughout the group;
- *Authority* is based on consent and consensus;
- *Decisions* are legitimized through discipline discussions and informed dialogue;
- *Contribution* to group learning is a primary value; and
- *Membership* is inclusive and based solely on the ability to contribute to the life of the organization.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/2p97b8xf>

# Leading Social Justice: Each Team's Journey

## North Bergen Federation of Teachers, North Bergen, N.J.

North Bergen Federation of Teachers (NBFT) represents teachers and support staff in the North Bergen School District, a comprehensive neighborhood school district in New Jersey serving approximately 8,000 students. In recent years, NBFT leaders have concentrated on building capacity of union members primarily through professional development, leveraging AFT's professional learning series for educators, including the Center for School Improvement Institute, the Summer Educator Academy, and the TEACH Conference.<sup>12</sup>

After attending the CSI 2020 Institute, North Bergen Federation of Teachers leaders were inspired by the three frames of unionism—industrial, professional and social justice—and, as a result, strengthened their commitment to professional learning with a focus on social justice. “We started with our executive committee members by engaging them in conversations about the role of the union in promoting social justice,” says NBFT President Carol Toomey.

### Establishing Project Goals

NBFT's journey began through facilitated conversations with the team that attended the CSI Institute in early 2021 by establishing goals and gaining clarity on how the team does its work. Project goals include:

- Engage union members in the CSI team's work, building upon progress toward social justice and professional learning underway;
- Build capacity of the CSI team to deliver and implement professional learning customized to North Bergen school communities; and

- Design and create structures and protocols for regular and consistent dialogue within the North Bergen community; document and tell our story so that other locals may benefit and learn.

“We needed to assess where we are on this culturally responsive pedagogy journey,” says team member Elizabeth Govea. The CSI Institute provided a foundation for moving forward, but it caused the team to pause and consider such questions as:

- Do we have a collective understanding of what culturally responsive pedagogy is, including terminology, definitions and best practices?
- What do we need to do as a union to engage our members in social justice work, and how do we communicate progress?
- How do we collaborate with the school district to design and implement professional learning on culturally responsive pedagogy?

### Designing Processes for Achieving the Goals

Last year's institute also spurred discussion among union leaders as to the role of the union in leading social justice. First things first. The team began by engaging NBFT's executive committee by designing an informative and collaborative session in early June 2021, allowing opportunities for discussion, feedback and analysis. “We wanted to know if our leaders were with us and if the union should play a role in that third frame—social justice,” says NBFT President Toomey. The team determined to use two frameworks they used during the CSI Institute: the Schlechty Center's Images of School, and the Consortium for Educational Change's Three Frames of Unionism, to structure the conversation

<sup>12</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/2p9bxhra>

by asking: *How do we see our schools?* and *Why should social justice be part of union work?*<sup>13</sup>

“I really like the Images of School chart; I’ve been referencing it so much since CSI,” says Elizabeth Govea, NBFT team member and teacher. “It created good conversation and, as we imagined, some people at some schools saw it differently than other people at other schools.” The three frames of unionism also fostered an important conversation.

Teacher leader and team member Leo Ospina says both frameworks demonstrated the team’s commitment to multifaceted conversations. “It sparked conversation and shed light, making it tangible and real.” Ospina says.

*“Looking at the rubric on unionism opened people’s eyes, and with the Images of School, they could see how the different roles—teachers, students, principals—play out in a learning organization versus a bureaucracy.”*

*-Leo Ospina, Teacher Leader and NBFT Team Member*

In a virtual work session, the CSI team designed an online survey to determine what they wanted to know from the executive committee about the union’s role and leading culturally responsive pedagogy. The team sought information from union leaders about their beliefs and values about social justice, their understanding of terminology, the positive changes and examples within their school communities, their interest in serving on committees, and the kinds of support they need to advance social justice and culturally responsive pedagogy. An online [North Bergen Executive Committee Survey](#)<sup>14</sup> was finalized by the team, and

<sup>13</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/yzs8xru6>

<sup>14</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/mrxmxtx9>

time during the June executive committee meeting was provided to respond to the survey.

Nearly all members (23) completed the survey; the team summarized the results and made them available to team members. Using a protocol (see Appendix G),<sup>15</sup> the CSI team looked for patterns and themes to inform the work as a union, including approaches to meet needs and interests of leaders and the North Bergen school community. “I believe the meeting was successful. We wanted to get a better understanding on where the executive council stood with certain issues, and it was clear from the results that the majority do feel the union should have an active role,” says Jocelyn Sulca, NBFT team leader and teacher.

Common themes mentioned throughout the survey included fostering student voice and agency, creating equitable and caring environments, having access to high-quality professional development, and carving out time and other resources to consistently support teachers districtwide.

### Designing Professional Learning

Design begins with customers and needs of customers. *Planning begins with goals, objectives, programs of action, and activities*—Dr. Phillip C. Schlechty

As a result of their CSI 2021 experience, union leaders accessed the Schlechty Center’s design process for adult learners to better understand the needs, values and motives of their audience—teachers who may volunteer to partake in culturally responsive pedagogy professional development. The process provided background information on the differences between designing and planning; 10 design qualities of engaging work; and assessments of engagement and achievement. The design process is outlined in the following footnote.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/yxubtj3>

<sup>16</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/fceredac>

The design process took place with the North Bergen Federation of Teachers CSI 2021 team over a series of three virtual meetings. The Schlechty Center’s Monica Solomon summarized the results and shared and discussed with the AFT culturally responsive trainers to inform and customize the course relative to North Bergen teachers’ needs and interests (design thinking). A summary of the results is included in the following footnote (see Appendix H).<sup>17</sup>

“I realized from this design experience that professional development has to be well thought out and meet teacher needs,” says Liz Govea, union and CSI team leader. “We care about the process and our teachers; we want them to see that we really took the time to design this for them.”

### Realizing Intended Results

The survey results clarified next steps for the team. Building capacity of the CSI team to design and deliver professional learning was paramount for NBFT leaders from the onset, but the survey reinforced their commitment. “We realized that we could design and lead PD on these topics,” says Govea. “When you hear these terms, if you aren’t familiar, you may be turned off, but the more we inform through professional development, our teachers will want to buy in.”

Given NBFT’s goal to deliver and implement professional learning customized to North Bergen school communities, the union leveraged the AFT Professional Learning Program.<sup>18</sup> Nineteen North Bergen teachers participated in the AFT’s Strategies for *Student Success Culturally Responsive Pedagogy* virtual professional learning series. Objectives included:

- **Operationalize** the connection between culture and cognition;
- **Demonstrate** how a “caring educator” with lofty expectations functions in the classroom;
- **Design** strength-focused lessons and activities;

<sup>17</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/3y7wyajc>

<sup>18</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/2p9bxhbra>

and

- **Implement** research-based culturally responsive pedagogy in a classroom with ethnically diverse students.

Subsequently, AFT trainers and facilitators trained four North Bergen Federation of Teachers leaders to design and lead professional learning consistent with the union’s Strategies for Student Success Culturally Responsive Pedagogy program. The CSI team debriefed the training and set about an action plan to design and deliver the program across the North Bergen school community, consistent with district and state priorities and guidelines.

One goal of the CSI team, *to design and create structures and protocols for regular and consistent dialogue within the North Bergen community*, is being addressed through the intentional design of professional learning communities (PLC). Union leaders found meaning and value in accessing the Schlechty Center’s frameworks of student engagement, designing engaging experiences, and Images of School. As a result, the Schlechty Center designed a toolkit of suggested activities to support teacher leaders in designing and facilitating PLCs. Additionally, the study guide includes an article by Zaretta Hammond, “Liberatory Education—Integrating the Science of Learning and Culturally Responsive Practice” from AFT’s *American Educator* (Summer 2021), and two articles from *Edutopia*, “Taking Small Steps Toward Equity” and “How to Build Deep Relationships with Students.” The AFT Study Guide can be found in the following footnote.<sup>19</sup>

### Envisioning a Future Orientation

NBFT leaders recognize that initiatives come and go, people make commitments that are forgotten or misplaced, training is held, and oftentimes things go back to how they were. Yet, collectively, their CSI 2021 experience created an urgency to strategically act upon beliefs and values about

<sup>19</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/2yysutar>

social justice and equity. “We know that the ultimate benefit is to our students,” says NBFT President Toomey.

The union has designed follow-up sessions with the original 19 participants of the Strategies for Student Success Culturally Responsive Pedagogy program to support them in applying their knowledge and skills within their classrooms as well as leading conversations among teachers and administrators schoolwide.

Union leaders who were trained in culturally responsive pedagogy intend to offer the course in spring 2022 and consistently throughout the 2022–23 school year. Creating the conditions for teachers and administrators to have consistent conversations around equity is a priority for union leaders. “Our union is always working for the common good of our members, students and the community we serve,” says NBFT President Toomey. “We are a diverse school district, and I see this work as a way teachers can address the needs of our diverse students.”

Fostering healthy labor-management relationships is a priority for North Bergen Federation of Teachers leaders. The superintendent approved time for the CSI team to meet regularly, supported AFT’s Culturally Responsive Pedagogy course offerings, and provided release time and stipends for mentoring classes sponsored by the union.

Leaders recognize that achieving districtwide equity is a journey and not simply a particular destination. “I think we are all learning that we need to be resilient in the journey. There will be many bumps, but we need to stay focused on a goal,” teacher leader Sulca says. “We also need to remember that small wins are still a win, and even though the journey may be long, if we are dedicated to social justice and culturally responsive pedagogy, it will be worth the wait.”

Looking ahead, union leaders are committed to increasing student engagement and agency; supporting teachers through meaningful equity work

in PLCs; partnering with community and social service organizations; creating safe and trusting opportunities for teachers to engage in courageous conversations around equity and social justice; and fostering labor-management structures and relationships districtwide.

Union leaders also look forward to using the AFT’s “[A Guide to Engaging Members Through Professional Development and Learning](#)”<sup>20</sup> as a resource and guide moving forward.

## St. Croix Education Association, Stillwater, Minn.

In spring 2020, the St. Croix Education Association leaders in Stillwater established an equity committee, which is responsible for identifying, connecting with, and engaging underrepresented groups within the district. As a result of SCEA’s participation in the CSI 2021 Institute, union leaders are leveraging the content and materials of the institute to design systems and structures to realize the committee’s goal of *creating just and equitable conditions for every student and allow for the full participation of all members of our staff and school community*. SCEA President Josiah Hill credits his union for leading equity efforts, and acknowledges that district administrators and school board members work in partnership to ensure that policies and practices are in place to foster equity efforts systemwide. Several students participated in CSI 2021 and union leaders continue to engage students in the equity committee’s work. “We are making sure our students are players in this effort,” SCEA President Hill says.

### Establishing Project Goals

Project goals for the CSI 2021 team build upon the union’s equity committee statement, established in spring 2020:

- **Equity Committee:** 7-10 members. This committee acknowledges the systemic barriers

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/engagingmembersthroughplguide.pdf>



that exist within our school system and is committed to engaging in the necessary work that must be completed collectively to remove these barriers. We recognize both our privilege and responsibility to shape policy, practices, and procedures that will lead to more just and equitable conditions for every student and will allow for the full participation of all members of our staff and school community. We will act with intention and purpose to ensure that our policies, practices, and procedures reflect the core beliefs of equity, access, and inclusion for all. (This committee will be responsible for identifying, building, connecting, and reflecting with underrepresented groups within the district. It is to serve as a conduit for underrepresented voices to be recognized, mobilized, and celebrated as stakeholders. It will also connect diverse individuals with leadership opportunities within the organization that fit their skills and passions.)

Building on the union's Equity Statement, the CSI 2021 team, in conjunction with the Schlechty Center, identified the following goals:

- Build capacity of the union's executive board to focus on social justice;
- Leverage the union's newly developed equity committee to engage the broader Stillwater community; and
- Support the union and CSI 2021 team to continue to engage students in its social justice agenda.

Equity committee Chair Brandon Auge says the union leadership made equity a priority, especially given Stillwater Area Public Schools' proximity to George Floyd's murder and subsequent protests and events in spring 2020.

### **Designing Processes for Achieving the Goals**

As was the case with the North Bergen Federation of Teachers, the Stillwater CSI team found the

*“Equity and social justice is the systemic work we needed to do as a union.”*

*-Brandon Auge,  
Equity Committee Chair*

Three Frames of Unionism<sup>21</sup> compelling as a framework for analysis and reflection among themselves and with other union leaders.

Leveraging their CSI overall team experience, union leaders set out to develop an actionable plan for their equity work. Using the Schlechty Center's Six Critical Social Systems,<sup>22</sup> the team focused on the Directional System referencing questions such as:

- Who are we?
- What accomplishments will make us most proud?
- What do we want to be like five years from now?
- If we present ourselves as who we say we are and accomplish what we propose to accomplish, is there reason to believe that those whose support we need will value our accomplishments as much as we do?

From this experience, union leaders determined next steps would be to authentically engage SCEA's executive committee to build mutual understanding for the importance of the union's role in fostering social justice within the Stillwater community. On Aug. 20, 2021, leaders designed a virtual session to focus on discussion and analysis of the Three Frames of Unionism. In small groups, leaders asked executive members to review the framework and identify something that they found interesting, something that affirmed their thinking about the role of the union, an area where the union fulfills its mission, or an idea to enhance the capacity of the union as professionals. Indi-

<sup>21</sup> <http://turnweb.org/attachments/332/3%20Frames%20of%20Comprehensive%20Unionism%202019.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/5c7wj6pp>



viduals shared reflections through conversation and identified next steps for becoming a more comprehensive union.

The CSI team also designed a survey to capture the perceptions and related suggestions of executive committee members using the Three Frames of Unionism—industrial, professional, and social justice—to assess the union’s attention and commitment to each frame. The team posed specific questions around the role of the union in social justice work, the nature and purpose of the SCEA’s equity committee, efforts underway in schools that celebrate racial and cultural diversity in schools, and the kinds of support needed to create structures and systems to advance educational equity work in schools.

SCEA leaders recognize new teachers as integral to the union’s social justice agenda. This is evident in the hiring of more teachers of color and the fact that new teachers are encouraging the union to advance meaningful professional development and to advocate for equity. “We have new teachers who are leaders and who are pushing us to move in this direction,” SCEA President Hill says.

### Realizing Intended Results

The CSI team compiled the results of the survey; members gave high marks for the union’s commitment to the industrial and professional frames. “We acknowledge that we are scaling up on the first two frames of unionism, but we have work to do on the social justice frame,” Hill says. “Our local leadership identified and affirmed a need for social justice in schools.”

Common themes emerged from SCEA’s Executive Committee Survey:

1. **Industrial Frame**—84 percent of respondents see a strong commitment (score of 4/5) to the industrial frame of comprehensive unionism (*bargaining, member rights, contracts*).
2. **Professional Frame**—76 percent of respondents see a strong commitment (score of 4/5) to the professional frame of comprehensive

unionism (*professional learning*).

3. **Social Justice Frame**—42 percent of respondents see a strong commitment (score of 4/5) to the social justice frame of comprehensive unionism (*educational equity, addressing opportunity gaps, providing equitable access to learning*).
4. There is an appetite among executive board members to think more critically about how we approach educational equity; 75 percent of respondents suggested that yes, there is a role for the SCEA in this work, and we need to move in this direction.
5. Survey results indicated that it is crucial given our changing demographics that we evolve in a direction that is more intentional in this area.

The CSI team debriefed the results through an [After-Action Review Protocol](#) (see Appendix I).<sup>23</sup> Using AFT’s CSI 2021 action planning template (goal/action, activities, tasks/resources/responsible/evidence of success), the team then set goals for the equity committee’s work. A sampling of goals include:

- Recruit and formalize equity committee members;
- Promote and recruit *Humanize My Hoodie* training sponsored by Education Minnesota (Dec. 11, 2021);
- Use results of the Executive Committee Survey to inform the committee’s work;
- Set a schedule for equity committee meetings and work sessions;
- Incorporate student voice into the work of the committee;
- Communicate the committee’s progress and results to the community;
- Leverage AFT’s professional development trainings and offerings to support the equity committee’s short- and long-term goals; and
- Consider sending a team to CSI 2022.

<sup>23</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/skaxfb52>

## Envisioning a Future Orientation

Part of the equity committee's work is to support teams in schools to focus attention on equity—achievement data, student engagement and literacy. “We envision more collaborative teams,” committee chair Auge says. “We are not serving everyone if we are teaching in our silos.”

Stillwater Area Public Schools incorporates student voice into systems, structures and programs. Listening to students and responding to their needs and interests is a district priority. “We had courageous students say that they did not have a good experience in our school district,” says SCEA President Hill. The district's Student Leadership Council focuses on elevating student voice and leadership to improve and ensure inclusiveness in the school culture and environment. With district support, students participate with teachers in conferences, including AFT's CSI 2021; lead peaceful protests; participate in restorative practices and culturally responsive training with teachers and administrators; participate on the district's Curriculum Advisory Council; and co-lead professional development with the Islamic Resource Group. Looking ahead, union leaders are designing systems for authentically engaging students in SCEA's equity committee.

Union-management collaboration is key to district-wide success, Hill says. “We have strong partnerships with the administration and the board, but we, as a union, need to lead and demonstrate our commitment to social justice.”

“Labor-management collaboration must be viewed as a shared opportunity, shared risk and shared responsibility,” says Eric Anderson, coordinator, Stillwater Area Public Schools' Office of Equity and Integration. “When done well, local labor unions have the potential to move from adult-driven entities to entities that truly focus on the staff, students and families they serve.”

## Curtis High School, New York City (United Federation of Teachers)

Curtis High School, operated by the New York City Department of Education, is located on Staten Island and serves approximately 2,800 students. The school's demographics have changed over the years, and union leaders wanted the school's culture to reflect the needs and interests of today's students. When Diane Isaac, an International Baccalaureate history and civics teacher at Curtis, watched the murder of George Floyd on television in spring 2020, she knew the school had to do more to promote racial justice and equality. Along with a core group of Isaac's colleagues, they created the Curtis High School Black and Brown Coalition (CBBC). Recruiting like-minded teachers and support staff, the CBBC created a vision and mission statement and established subcommittees by the summer of 2020. “We wanted to represent and embrace the voices and culture of underrepresented students,” Isaac says.

### Establishing Project Goals

Union leaders leveraged their CSI 2021 experience to bolster the coalition's mission, *to create a community that acknowledges, respects, values and reflects ethnicities of color*. Building on the solid work underway and fostering collaborative relationships with the principal and other school leaders, the CBBC, in conjunction with the Schlechty Center, focused on three project goals:

- Work in conjunction with the AFT to leverage the team's CSI 2021 action plan and the school's racial equity platform, specifically designing professional learning;
- Engage the school community, starting with faculty and staff, in meaningful conversations about the CBBC's vision and mission; and
- Incorporate student voice into the school's racial equity platform, including developing students as leaders advocating for themselves and each other.

“We were well-organized, and by the start of the 2020-21 school year, even though we were in the middle of a pandemic, we were positioned to invite our principal and other teachers to join us in achieving our overall agenda,” says teacher Lorne Odell.

Building on the solid work underway and fostering collaborative relationships with the principal and other school leaders, the CBBC was part of the high school’s hiring committee this past summer which resulted in nine new hires, five of whom are teachers of color. “The CBBC played a significant role in diversifying our staff,” says CBBC member Jennifer Drinkwater. “”

*“Our principal recognized the value of hiring more teachers of color to better reflect our school’s demographics.”*

*-Jennifer Drinkwater, Member,  
Curtis High School Black and  
Brown Coalition (CBBC)*

Intent on authentically involving students in equity experiences, in spring and summer 2021, the CBBC designed and organized a Black History Day celebration and collaborated and coordinated with Staten Island’s Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden to celebrate Juneteenth.

## **Designing Processes for Achieving the Goals**

To realize its vision, *a school community that is culturally conscious and inclusive of Black and Brown students, staff, families and other stakeholders*, the CBBC identified five strategies:

1. **Become a more culturally inclusive school.** The objective, to eliminate acts of racism in the school, requires that the CBBC support the school staff in becoming aware of overt and covert acts of racism by providing ongoing professional development focused on “increasing anti-racist mindsets.”

2. **Educate students using a culturally conscious lens.** The CBBC’s objective is to *implement culturally responsive and relevant instructional practices into every course offered at CHS*. Action plans include providing ongoing professional development and incentives focused on implementing culturally responsive and relevant practices that foster a nurturing community.
3. **Change staff demographics to be more reflective of student demographics.** Increasing the number of staff who are people of color is the goal of this strategy, including increasing people of color who participate in the hiring process as well as coordinating recruitment efforts by collaborating with the administrative staff.
4. **Develop students’ abilities to advocate and lead.** This calls for designing support systems for students to become change agents with the school, local and global communities by providing them with opportunities to identify, analyze and challenge systems of oppression.
5. **Collaborate with community and United Federation of Teachers (UFT) partners.** Utilizing community resources to support the growth and development of staff and students is the goal associated with this strategy. The objective is to increase interactions between individuals and groups in the community to promote cultural enrichment and academic and economic opportunities.

The CBBC took the next steps by establishing subcommittees to develop and implement identified strategies. These subcommittees include:

- Staff Development and Accountability;
- Culturally Relevant and Responsive Instruction;
- Diversity in Hiring;
- Enrichment/Extracurricular; and
- UFT/Community Partnerships.

“I feel good about how we all came together, with support from our principal, Gregory Jaenicke, to establish the CBBC and accomplish some very worthwhile goals,” says Jennifer Drinkwater.

## Realizing Intended Results

In addition to influencing the hiring of teachers of color for the 2021–22 school year, CBBC members led and facilitated professional development for their colleagues, consistent with the vision of the Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework, a state-sponsored program. Teacher leaders Jennifer Drinkwater and Audree Zimmerman are leading the professional learning this school year. The feedback from teachers was both positive and aligned with the CBBC’s mission. “We had teachers come up to us and express how meaningful the training was to them,” Drinkwater says. “We had great conversations that go a long way in realizing the changes we seek here at Curtis High School.”

Because so many of the Schlechty Center frameworks offer constructive vehicles for dialogue, reflection and analysis, CBBC trainers are incorporating the study guide into their training modules.<sup>24</sup>

Crucial to CBBC’s mission and a goal of the CSI 2021 team is to incorporate student voice into the school’s racial equity platform, including developing students as leaders advocating for themselves and each other. This requires teachers and administrators to genuinely listen to students regarding their learning experiences at Curtis High School, as well as their perceptions relating to the school’s culture and structure. The CSI team, all members of the CBBC, participated in work sessions designed by the Schlechty Center to determine what information from students would best inform the coalition’s agenda and to promote its work schoolwide. CBBC envisions conducting student focus groups this school year; they designed a customized process and protocol to collect student voice.<sup>25</sup>

“We are committed to our mission; listening carefully to our students and understanding that what they envision for our school is at the heart of our work,” says CBBC member Diane Isaac. “Listening to student voice genuinely allows us as teachers to support our students in ways that are relevant to them and their lives,” says Odell, a teacher and CBBC member.

## Envisioning a Future Orientation

CBBC teacher leaders agree that the pandemic provided the virtual time and space to envision and launch their coalition. Once back in school, the teachers leading this effort will not be deterred by the more pervasive challenges and obstacles. “We are committed to our mission and vision, including finding the time and space to keep going,” says Isaac. Throughout the school year, more and more teachers are interested in supporting the mission and vision of the CBBC. “We welcome our allies, including new staff, to be part of our mission as we work collaboratively to gain broader support,” says CSI team member Zimmerman.

<sup>24</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/skaxfb52>

<sup>25</sup> <https://tinyurl.com/yjzmqchy2>

# Appendix A

## AFT CSI 2021 Sharing Session Sept. 29, 2021; 4 p.m. EDT

### Purpose

The purpose of this sharing session is to develop and foster a community of learners with three AFT affiliates engaged in this past year's CSI Institute. Through dialogue, analysis and reflection, the goal of these sharing sessions is to promote collegiality and foster collaboration among and between unions to strengthen local efforts, and ultimately, to capture and share lessons learned, products and narratives to benefit the broader AFT community.

*Note: The AFT will convene at least one other sharing session prior to the end of the year and one prior to CSI 2022.*

### Participants

- North Bergen (N.J.) Federation of Teachers
- St. Croix Education Association, Stillwater, Minn.
- Curtis High School (United Federation of Teachers, New York City)

### Sharing Protocol

#### Step 1: TOTAL 25 Minutes

Representatives from each union will have eight minutes to share what they have been doing with regard to advancing their learning, actions, experiences as a result of AFT's CSI 2021 Institute. Presenters will attempt to use the full eight minutes. The following questions may help presenters frame the conversation:

- What are you realizing? In what ways is your thinking changing about the role of the union in fostering a social justice agenda?
- What are you noticing about conversations occurring within your union, schools or communities?
- In what ways has your focus on social justice impacted your conversations/relationships with district leaders/school leaders?
- What steps have you taken as a CSI team—activities, experiences, actions, results—that you would like to share at this time?
- What supports are in place that encourage you to continue this work?

Participants listen attentively and jot down notes.

**REPEAT THIS STEP FOR EACH UNION AT THIS TIME.**

## **Step 2: TOTAL 10 Minutes**

Beginning with the first group of presenters, the other two unions will have three minutes to do one or more of the following:

- Pose a question.
- Affirm something they heard.
- Offer a “What if ... ?” Or “How about ...?”
- Make a general comment.

## **Step 3: Responses and Reflections TOTAL 15 Minutes**

Now, each participant will take no more than five minutes to respond to any question or comment on anything said during the previous round.

**REPEAT THE PROCESS FOR EACH UNION.**

## **Step 4: Large Group Debrief and Analysis TOTAL 15 Minutes**

- What have we learned?
- What support is in place for us to continue this work? What support do we need?
- What suggestions do we have to foster strong labor-management partnerships?
- How do we continue to move forward and go deeper?



# Appendix B

## Images of School



Core Business	Student as:	Parent As:	Teacher As:	Principal As:	Supt. and Central Office as:	School Board as:	Likely Classroom Files	Level of Student Learning	Guiding Metaphor
Designing Engaging Academic Work for Students and Leading Them to Success in That Work	Volunteer and Knowledge Worker	Partner and Member of the School Community	Leader, Designer, and Guide to Instruction	Leaders of Leaders	Moral and Intellectual Leader and Capacity Builders	Community Builders and Advocates for Schools	Highly Engaged	Create, Evaluate, Analyze, Apply, Understand, Remember	Learning Organization
Diagnosis, Prescription Prescription, and Treatment	Client	Guarantor and Questionable Ally	Professional Performer and Presenter, or Clinician and Diagnostician	Chief of Staff	CEO and Technicians and Support Staff	Board of Directors	Well Managed	Analyze, Apply, Understand, and Sometimes Remember Long Term	Professional Service Delivery Organization
Testing, Remediation, and Reporting	Raw Material and Product	Supply Source and Determinant of Product Quality	Skilled Worker	Shop Foreman	Plant Manager and Inspectors and Supervisors	Owners and Advocates	Passive Congenial	Understand, but Unlikely to Remember Long Term	Factory
Labeling, Categorizing, Placement, and Recording	Excess Inventory	Primary Shipper and Receiver	Clerk and Keeper of Records	Midlevel Bureaucrat and Keeper of the Keys	Property Manager and Directors of Maintenance, Shipping, and Personnel	Safety Inspectors and Fire Marshalls	Threatened	Learn Little	Warehouse
Containment, Monitoring, Corrective Action, and Punishment	Inmate	Distrusted Visitor	Guard	Warden	Bureau Chief and Department Directors, Hearing Officers, and Parole Officers	Hearing Officers and Parole Board	Conflict Habituated	Students Develop Negative Attitudes Toward Disciplined Learning	Prison

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# Appendix C

## Study Guide in Support of AFT's CSI Institutes

### Activity 1

The column titled **Guiding Metaphor** identifies various images of school. As you think about schools today, particularly your school, what metaphor would you say is an accurate representation of your school at this time? Why do you say this?

### Activity 2

The column titled **Core Business** identifies various types of work that a school is “busy” doing. As you read through what is listed in the column and think about what you spend a majority of your time doing, what would you say is the core business of your school at this time? What behaviors are present that support this view?

### Activity 3

The column titled **Student as** identifies various images of how students may be viewed. If we were to bring together a representative group of students from your school and ask them which image best represents how they feel they are viewed by teachers, how would they respond according to this chart?

### Activity 4

The column titled **Student as** identifies various images of how students may be viewed. In your opinion, how do the majority of teachers in the school view students? What behaviors support this view?

### Activity 5

The column titled **Teacher as** identifies various images of the teacher's role. If we were to poll the teachers from your school, which image would they indicate best represents them? What behaviors support this view?

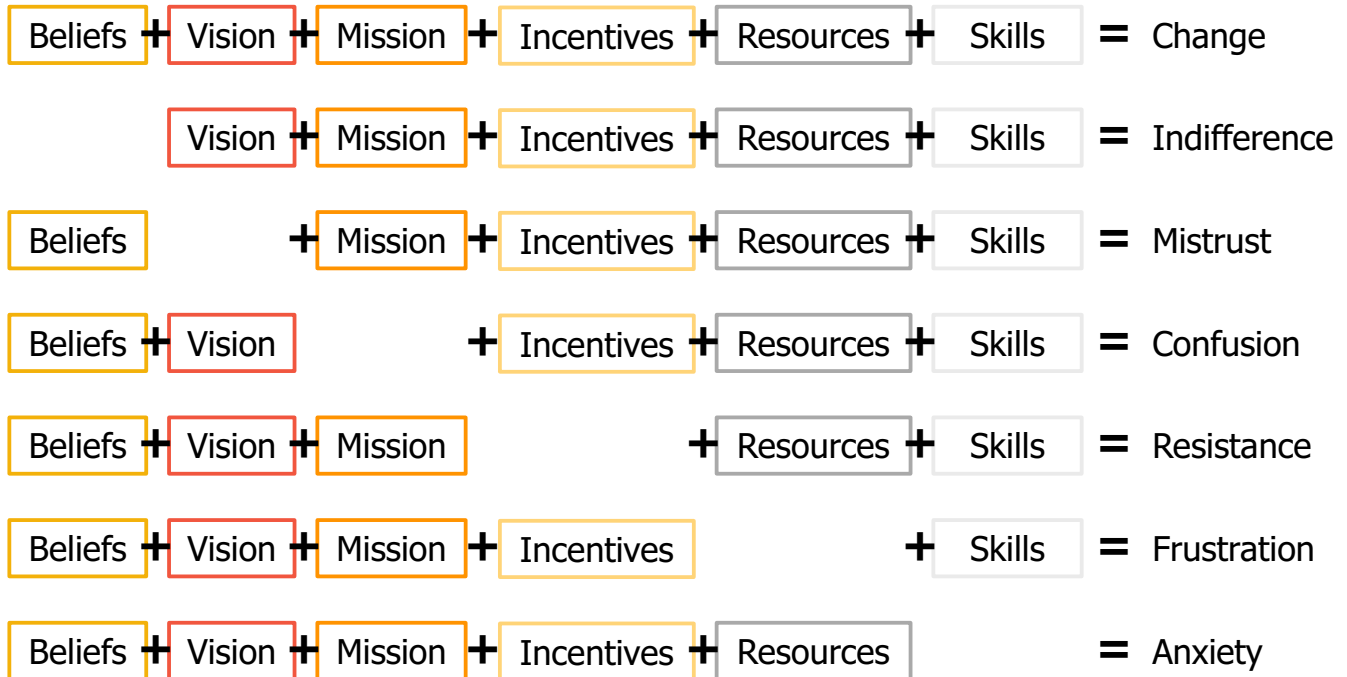
### Activity 6

Review the **Guiding Metaphor** column of the **Images of School** chart in Appendix B. Choose a teammate and take turns sharing responses to these questions:

- How do you see your school?
- How do teachers see your school?
- How do parents see your school?
- How does the community see your school?
- How do you want to see your school?

## Appendix D

### Leading Structural/Cultural Change



Adapted from Knoster, T. (1991) Presentation at TASH Conference, Washington, D.C.  
(Adapted by Knoster from Enterprise Group, Ltd.)

*Schlechty*

# Appendix E

Adapted from Roland S. Barth, *Improving Schools from Within*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1990.

## Sandboxes or Beehives?

Attributes	Relationships			
	Adversarial	Competitive	Congenial	Collegial
Communication	Lie and deceive	Omissions and sabotage	Polite, "Happy talk"	Honest, trusting, respectful
Interaction	Dodge and weave	Secret practices	Nonintrusive parallel play	Collaboration
Sharing of Resources	Seek and destroy	Seek and find	Focus on uniformity and equality	Focus on quality
Dependence	Co-dependent	Dependent	Independent	Inter-dependent
<b>Metaphor</b>	<b>Battle Fields</b>	<b>Playing Fields</b>	<b>Sandboxes</b>	<b>Beehives</b>

Schlechty

## Appendix F

A *learning community*, as the term is used here, is a group of people who are bound together by the pursuit of common questions, problems or issues. The members of the group have developed clear norms and procedures to ensure that this pursuit goes forward in a way that honors the ideas of mutualism, collegiality, trust, loyalty and friendship, while showing a bias for hard-nosed analysis and concrete action.

*Communities of learners* are collections of individuals joined together for the purpose of sharing a common learning experience but who are otherwise only loosely affiliated. Learning communities are distinguished from communities of learners primarily through the presence of a common action agenda and through mutual concern with addressing shared problems, issues or questions. Unlike learning communities, communities of learners only coincidentally work together on problems, issues or questions. Learning organizations are complex social organizations that purposefully create, support and use learning communities as the primary means of inducting new members; creating, developing and importing knowledge; assigning tasks and evaluating performances; and establishing goals and maintaining direction.

*Learning organizations* create and maintain networks of learning communities and use these networks as the primary means of accomplishing the work of the organization. Learning organizations have the following characteristics:

- Power is diffuse throughout the group.
- Authority is based on consent and consensus.
- Decisions are legitimized through disciplined discussions and informed dialogue.
- Contribution to group learning is a primary value.
- Membership is inclusive and based solely on the ability to contribute to the life of the organization.

# Appendix G

## Protocol for Debriefing Results of the Survey

[North Bergen Federation of Teachers, June 9, 2021](#)<sup>26</sup>

### Step 1: Process and Results

Overall, do you think the meeting last week with the executive council accomplished what was intended? What evidence could you provide?

How effective were the two frameworks (Three Frames of Unionism and Images of School) in introducing and facilitating the conversation?

### Step 2: Union's Role

Read through the responses to the second question in Step 1 regarding the union's role in advocating for social justice.

- What trends and patterns do you notice?
- What are the implications for students within the responses?

### Step 3: Developing a Common Language

As you reflect on the responses regarding respondents' familiarity with the terms -culturally responsive pedagogy, social justice and restorative practices ...

- What confirmed your thinking?
- What surprised you?
- What steps do we need to take to develop a common language connected to social justice and culturally responsive pedagogy?
- What are the implications for us as a CSI team?

<sup>26</sup> <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ANTR--huzAOLvHZpXlx70-6YxY1elkvczO7GIDox0L4/edit?usp=sharing>



#### Step 4: Current Context

We asked executive council members to share practices within their schools and/or department.

- What do these responses tell us about our current practices?
- What is obvious?
- What is missing?

#### Step 5: Leading Social Justice Work

Nearly one-half of the executive council said *yes* to serving on a committee to support the union's social justice work. Half responded *no* or *maybe*.

- What is the best way to identify those most interested in being part of your CSI 2021 team?
- How do we continue to involve everyone in our social justice work?

#### Step 6: Support to Advance Social Justice

In your own words, what do union leaders need as leaders to increase awareness and create structures and systems to advance social justice and culturally responsive practices with schools?

# Appendix H

Aug. 19, 2021

## Summary of Design Process for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Course

*“Design begins with customers and needs of customers. Planning begins with goals, objectives, programs of action and activities.”—Phillip C. Schlechty*

This summary represents the work of the North Bergen Federation of Teachers CSI 2021 team over a series of three virtual meetings. Using the Schlechty Center Design Process and facilitated by Monica Solomon of the Schlechty Center, this summary will support the team's work with AFT CRP trainers/facilitators and inform the design of the course relative to North Bergen teachers' needs and interests (design thinking).

[Design vs. Planning](#)<sup>27</sup>

[Adult Spec Sheet for master](#)<sup>28</sup>

### **Picture of Success:**

North Bergen Federation of Teachers AFT CSI 2021 team will design and facilitate a system of professional learning and [support structures](#) focused on culturally responsive pedagogy beginning in October 2021. Participants will develop cultural awareness of their school and classrooms and be positioned to better understand students in order to meet their needs, motives, and interests through the design of culturally responsive experiences.

### **Assessment of Engagement:**

We will know participants are engaged because they are asking questions; using the functions of virtual learning to share ideas and strategies; and are connecting with each other throughout the duration of the course and beyond.

### **Assessment of Achievement:**

Participants will create a product that has meaning and value to them; share their learning with administrators and colleagues within their school communities; complete the course work for credit (NJDoE); and successfully implement practices in their classrooms.

Using the 10 Design Qualities of engaging work, participants followed the guided design process (see adult spec sheet above). While each Design Quality was addressed, **Content and Substance, Product Focus, Organization of Knowledge; Protection from Adverse Consequences; Affiliation, Affirmation, and Authenticity** are essential when designing for North Bergen teachers.

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<sup>27</sup> [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Gx-n5-rbEE7Mwv-sPJ3V2heV\\_OSvhmR69C8qjPXqKV8/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Gx-n5-rbEE7Mwv-sPJ3V2heV_OSvhmR69C8qjPXqKV8/edit)

<sup>28</sup> <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1FNm0XAvQ9E0b8vI-GkQAE28hleWMSk7zGFH4R8Fybdk/edit>

## 10 Design Qualities<sup>29</sup>

**Content and Substance:** Explore definitions such as culturally responsive pedagogy, social justice, classroom culture; teaching truth connected to social justice to develop critical thinkers, and create a collective understanding of what it means to have a democratic society. Integrate skills and strategies to incorporate social justice throughout the curriculum. Provide access to tools and resources to better understand students, their cultures, backgrounds, needs and interests.

**Product Focus:** Participants could design a unit of work, a lesson plan, a process to share what was learned within their schools. Other products could include but are not limited to: podcasts, newsletters, student surveys, study guides, presentations for the union to share on its website and/or future training.

**Organization of Knowledge:** Start with the Schlechty Center's Images of School chart and the resources and tools for teachers to understand their students' needs, interests and motives. Multiple forms of interaction would allow for an engaging virtual learning environment, including chats, collaborative documents (Google, Padlet, AFT CSI resources. Allow 24/7 access to resources and materials. Access AFT's vast resources and expertise on CRP.

**Protection from Adverse Consequences:** Provide opportunities throughout the course for participants to provide feedback, ask questions, receive feedback and encouragement as they create their products, Connect NJDoE professional standards to teachers' professional development plan. Ask for reflections at the end of each session. Establish group norms and review them prior to each session. Create space and time for colleagues to collaborate. Provide a platform for anonymous feedback.

**Affiliation:** Participants will deliberately share their products with other course participants as well as within their school buildings. Smaller breakout sessions within the course will allow for deeper forms of affiliation as well as leverage the Design Quality of Protection from Adverse Consequences. Protocols will be designed and customized for analysis and feedback. Choice will be provided (partners, products, assessments).

**Affirmation:** Publicly shared products would provide affirmation to the participants. Other forms include sharing lesson plans districtwide; Instagram and Twitter; school websites; display of student work in school, public places and local businesses.

**Authenticity:** Videos, models, and examples of culturally responsive pedagogy in "real life" that demonstrate success would be authentic and relevant to North Bergen educators. CSI team members' reflections and experiences would provide authenticity, as well as examples of how course participants are using what they have learned and sharing with others during PLCs, grade level and/or department meetings.

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<sup>29</sup> <https://schlechtycenter.box.com/s/3s1s8432c4pbbk6q1egbqjb4tf6aw37x>

# Appendix I

## After-Action Review

1. What happened?
2. Why did it happen?
3. What can we learn from it?



