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# Foreword

**E**ducators are called upon to teach every child, regardless of race, class, gender, disability, or other markers of difference. This imperative has become more important in the rapidly changing contexts of U.S. society and education. No longer a monolithic society dominated by a single race, the United States is now populated with individuals from numerous races and ethnicities. So too are schools in every context—urban, rural, and suburban. Thus, race and culture have increasingly become a central focus in the education of children in U.S. public schools.

The increased diversity in schools raises numerous questions about how teachers teach, students learn, and leaders lead. Among these questions are: What are the most effective instructional techniques needed to educate students from diverse backgrounds? What levels of cultural knowledge do teachers and leaders need to educate children from diverse backgrounds? What levels of cultural competency do teachers and leaders need to educate children from diverse backgrounds? In what ways can schools fulfill their responsibility to educate every child? These and other questions are addressed in this book. CampbellJones and colleagues clearly articulate the bottom line for meeting the social, emotional, and educational needs of all children: Schools as organizational structures and the educators in them must confront and change negative beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors toward students who have long been considered “other people’s children.”

As the authors correctly point out, cultural proficiency is a framework for guiding schools and school systems toward policies, practices, and procedures that lead to an excellent and equitable education for all children, rather than for selected students. In my own experiences as a teacher, administrator, and now as a university professor, I have seen teachers and leaders struggle with how to effectively educate all children, and particularly children from diverse backgrounds. This has especially been the case in districts with a significant number of schools where students of color

represent the majority of the populations, and school districts with large influxes of immigrants. Thus, race and its companion dilemma, class, have in many districts fueled teachers' (and sometimes parents') resistance to viewing every child as worthy of the best possible education and their best efforts. These issues point to the need for cultural proficiency at all levels of education, but especially in the classroom.

This book is timely and much needed. The cultural proficiency framework represents a foundation for gaining knowledge and skills that will help teachers and leaders not only to become culturally proficient, but to view cultural proficiency as integral to good teaching and effective leadership. The practical examples, the exercises, and the opportunities for reflection all serve to guide the reader to a better understanding of the importance of cultural proficiency in instructional and leadership practices. Rather than a one-time professional development exercise or the next new buzz word, the book emphasizes that cultural proficiency must become part of the philosophy and mission of schools.

The essence of the book can be summed up in the authors' five essential elements of cultural competency—namely, that teachers and leaders are competent when they believe in and have a commitment to social justice, advocacy, the mentoring of underserved students for access to educational opportunity, the mentoring of more privileged students for historical awareness of inequity, and a commitment to leveling the educational and societal playing field for all students regardless of race, class, gender, disability, or other markers of difference. Armed with these commitments, teachers and leaders can fulfill their responsibility to educate every child.

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