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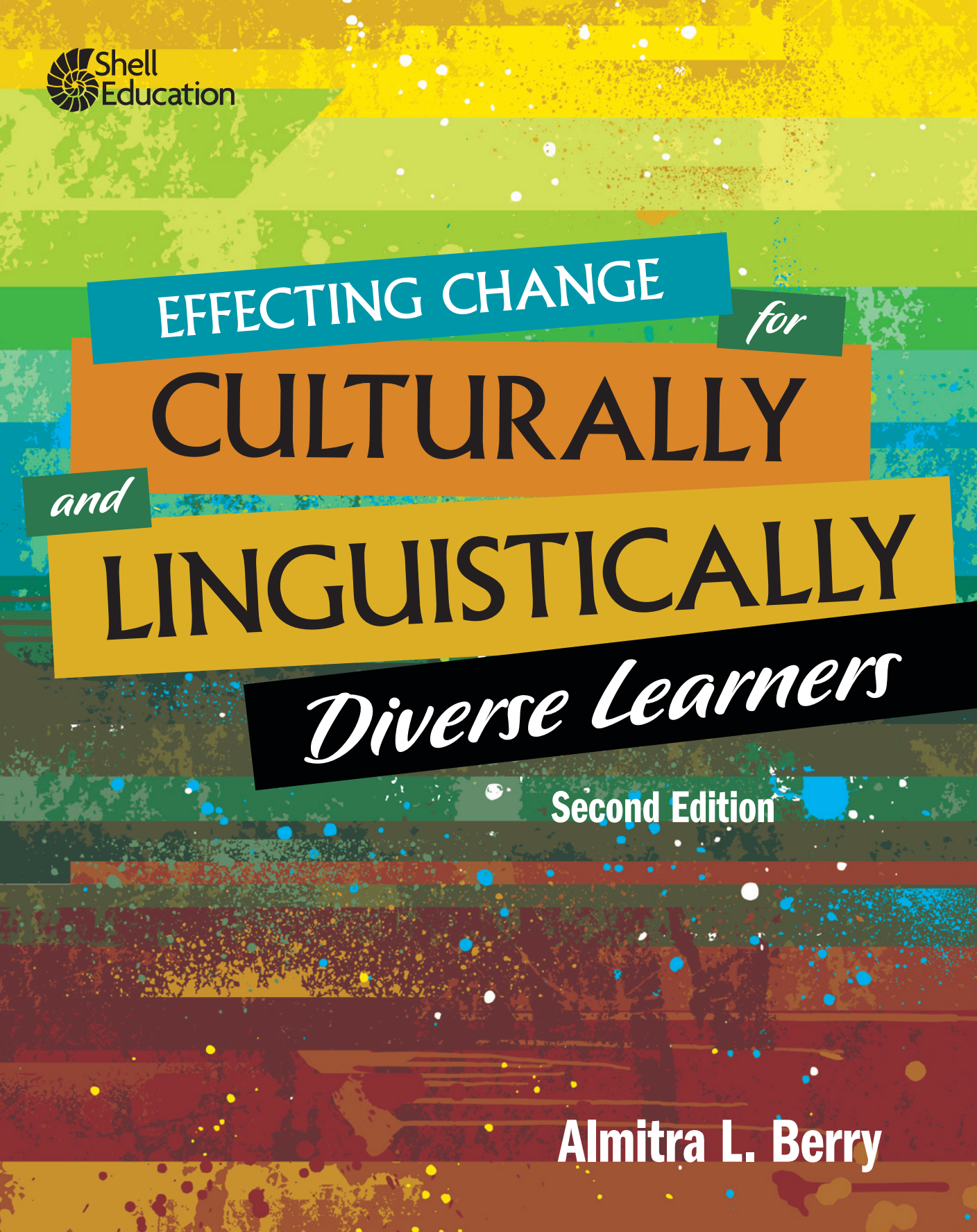
Shell Education
EFFECTING CHANGE for
CULTURALLY and
LINGUISTICALLY
Diverse Learners
Second Edition
Almitra L. Berry

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Introduction

Many practitioners work with culturally and linguistically diverse learners (CLDLs). I hope to help them understand not only how but why we must seek culturally appropriate and academically equitable instruction for students from diverse cultures, diverse languages, and low-wealth families, so that they have greater opportunities, most notably for high academic success, but also for better life outcomes in general. Use this book if you are working on your own or as part of a professional learning community to guide the adoption, development, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring of a culturally appropriate response to instruction at a school site or school district.

In this book, I introduce you to a model, the Culturally Appropriate Response to Instruction (CARTI) Framework, to help accomplish your work. One thing we know: sociopolitical debate will not prepare our children for success. Appropriate practice will.

> *According to the latest National Assessment of Adult Literacy report (NAAL), over 90 million (4 out of 10) U.S. adults are living lives socially and economically disadvantaged due to poor reading skills. Adults with low levels of literacy are significantly more likely to live in poverty, engage in crime and other forms of social pathology, and to live unhealthy, and even shorter lives. (Children of the Code 2010)*

No matter what role you serve in the pre-K–12 educational setting, you have an impact on the lives of children. You are accountable. This book presents a framework and a rationale for culturally appropriate response to instruction for CLDLs who may suffer from provision gaps in reading. I do not offer a cookie-cutter or one-size-fits-all approach. This book asks you to think. I ask you to examine your current practices and evaluate their effectiveness for the learners you teach.

We have a moral and ethical imperative to understand the subtle differences in the ways children from diverse cultures and languages learn. We have a moral and ethical imperative to examine our own implicit biases and the role of systemic racism in our schools. Only with that knowledge can we address the spectrum of change that is necessary to effectively design and deliver appropriate instruction for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

About This Second Edition

Ten years ago, while completing my dissertation on leadership in majority-learners-of-color, low-wealth, large urban school districts and how superintendents influenced academic achievement, I wrote the first edition of this book. Bothered by the things I continued to see in classrooms across the country in terms of instructional practices, content, and achievement for our nation's most underserved and fragile learners, I penned these words in the hopes of influencing educators beyond those I worked with as an educational consultant.

Much has changed since then. What I have learned has impacted the model and the language I use when discussing culturally and linguistically diverse learners (CLDLs). In this edition, you will not find the word *minority* in reference to the racial or ethnic origins of learners. They are *learners of color*, no longer a minority. They are Black, Latinx, Asian, or Native or Indigenous learners. They are not homogenous. Neither will you find the term *at risk*, except as referenced or cited in specific research. Our knowledge has increased. As Maya Angelou wrote, "Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." I know more. I intend to do better, not only for you, the educator, but for every child who walks through the doors of our classrooms every day.

This book will help you question your beliefs about the purpose of education and the practices you were taught. Through reflection, collaborative activities, and examining your thoughts, language, and practices, you may see the purpose of school very differently from what you learned in your school of education and earlier practice.

In this second edition, I set forth the Culturally Appropriate Response to Instruction (CARTI) Framework, which is a practical, socio-culturally relevant approach to teaching and learning for CLDLs. This five-step framework has a single central focus: academic achievement. At each step, you are reminded that every curricular and instructional decision you make must be based on improving life outcomes for the learners in your classroom, your school, and your district.

We begin by focusing on cultural awareness, step 1 of the CARTI Framework. I ask you to examine your own culture and then think of the classroom as its own unique culture, comprised of students whose cultural reality is both independent of and external to the reality of school. As you work through the book, you will find yourself on the Road to CARTI. The framework is designed to take you on a journey that leads to academic equity for every learner. After all, the definition of *equity* is every child getting what they need to be as successful as they possibly can.

My goal is to challenge you to consider that teaching and learning must be based on the recognition that an alternate reality exists in the lives of many, if not all, of our learners. The CLDL may not be able to transcend their situation; however, every learner can create schemata from experiences both within and outside of school that may be used to solve problems in all the learner's environments.

Chapter 1 shows how tapping into our own background and culture creates a frame of reference for CLDLs. We begin our journey at step 1 of the CARTI Framework. In **Chapter 2**, we take step 2. We get to the root of persistent achievement gaps, naming the provision gap for what it is and what it does to our learners. We examine the different approaches to reading instruction to better assess teaching methods and make an informed decision as to which approach is best for our students.

I firmly believe that the first and best form of intervention is *pre*vention. So we take step 3 of the framework in **Chapter 3**, where I outline how strong and effective core instruction can make a huge difference in academic equity and student outcomes by preventing the development of provision gaps.

Assessment, step 4 of the framework, is a tricky area addressed in **Chapter 4**. Here, I walk you through the ins and outs of screening and progress monitoring and, more important, how to act on the information and data you collect.

If the core program is not meeting students' needs and they're reading and performing below grade-level expectations, they've fallen victim to the provision gap. And the intervention must be strategic. So in **Chapter 5**, you'll synthesize what you've learned in the first four chapters as I guide you through the general structure of reading interventions. The work here provides context for teaching learners who are casualties of the curriculum schools use. We'll look at standards, unpacking several across multiple states and analyzing the inequities embedded in them. Digging deeper into data in **Chapter 6**, you'll take step 5 of the framework. You'll learn how to determine

the levels of intervention needed for those same curriculum casualties with data-driven decision making.

You may already be wondering: when your learners with provision gaps are also challenged by cultural or language differences, what special knowledge do you need to help these students reach benchmarks? **Chapter 7** provides some answers.

Although teaching is often thought of as a creative endeavor, our CLDLs cannot afford to experience untested curriculum. **Chapter 8** explains why instruction must be scientifically validated for learners like yours. It must be deliberate and intentional to help your learners succeed. **Chapter 9** outlines why a culturally appropriate response to instruction must be supported school-wide to achieve true academic equity. Collaboration among peers, colleagues, parents, and community members is instrumental to a successful implementation and the promotion of equitable practices for all learners. In this chapter, I introduce the CARTI Framework for Professional Learning.

Finally, we reaffirm the necessity of a culturally appropriate framework of instruction with a morale-building **Chapter 10**, which reminds you of the impact your teaching has on the lives of your students. It is the Road to CARTI, but we aren't there yet!

Chapter 2

The Root of Persistent, Pervasive Achievement Gaps

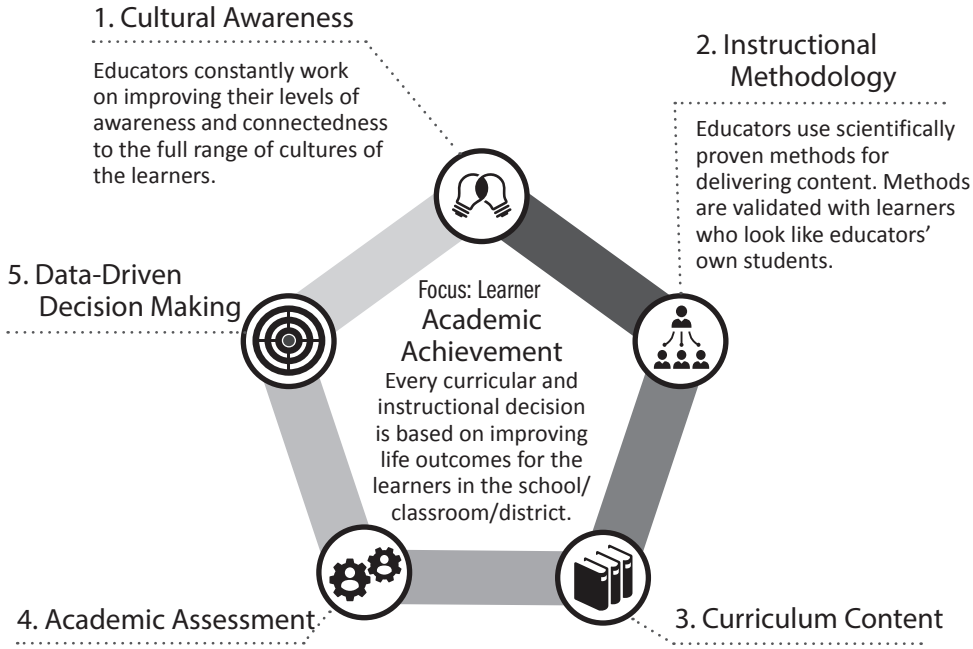
If a woman cooks bad food, she says that that was the thing she wanted to eat.

—IGBO PROVERB

The most powerful question to ask when working to uncover the root of a problem is *why*? Why do culturally and linguistically diverse learners (CLDLs) struggle in the majority of our schools? When we dig deep into instructional beliefs and practices, what do we learn about outcomes? In this chapter, we examine two phenomena that tend to surface when we perform a root cause analysis. The first is a soft bigotry of low expectations. The second is a lack of accountability, something I have referred to for years as *dysteachia*. For context, we will also examine the seven theories on the teaching of reading, then take some first steps with placing our practices on that spectrum.

In Chapter 1, we focused on building and activating our own schema to understand and commit to the importance of cultural awareness as the first component of the Culturally Appropriate Response to Instruction (CARTI) Framework. Now we examine the second component, instructional methodology, wherein educators use scientifically proven methods for delivering content (figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. *The Culturally Appropriate Response to Instruction (CARTI) Framework: Instructional Methodology*



PRACTITIONER'S PERSPECTIVE

Doctors take the Hippocratic Oath. What if educators also had to take an oath to teach? What would that oath look like? Perhaps something like this:

I will apply pedagogic measures for the benefit of all children according to my ability and judgment. I will keep them from illiteracy and innumeracy. I will neither use an inappropriate method, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect. I will not teach to a test. I will teach for the benefit of children, remaining free of all intentional injustice, of all mischief, and in particular of low expectations for children who come to learn. (adapted from the modern translation of the Hippocratic Oath; Lasagna 1964)

This book does not address value ethics, that is, the idea that one culture's values are more ethical than another's. However, we do operate from two foundational ideas. First, to believe as a nation in a free public education means that the nation should demand fair and equitable treatment of all children, particularly those children traditionally marginalized, disenfranchised, unserved, and underserved. That foundational idea is rooted in step 1 of the CARTI Framework–cultural awareness. Second, instructional decision making must be based on scientific data and be free of bias.

With that foundation, you'll be asked several times along our journey to recognize and name three practices: (1) *doing harm*, (2) *allowing harm*, and (3) *denying resources* in the context of teaching and learning. When we examine the data that describe academic achievement of CLDLs, we find that learners are being exposed to one or even all three of these instructional experiences. At the root of that exposure is bias that would have us believe our CLDLs do not learn as easily as White and affluent children, are more difficult to teach than White and affluent children, or require more intervention. No scientific evidence supports any of those beliefs.

We need to recognize and reckon with three harmful instructional practices:

1. Doing harm
2. Allowing harm
3. Denying resources

Let's assess how we expose learners to these three practices, behaviors we will place under the umbrella of *systemic and institutional bias*. Through one or more of these instructional practices, school systems consent to unacceptable academic outcomes for CLDLs. The numbers prove the argument if we study the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data from 1992 through 2019:

- During that 27-year period, the national average reading score at grade 4 rose by only 3 points: from 217 to 220. The national average reading score at grade 8 rose by only 3 points as well: from 260 to 263.
- From 2017 to 2019, scores declined at both grades 4 and 8, by 2 points and 3 points, respectively.
- The percentage of grade 4 learners performing at the level of proficient declined from 37 percent in 2017 to 35 percent in 2019.
- The percentage of grade 8 learners performing at the level of proficient declined from 36 percent in 2017 to 33 percent in 2019.

Why?

The statistics are even more grim for Black, Latinx, and Native or Indigenous learners (see figure 2.2). At the fourth-grade level, the following percentage of learners scored at or above the proficient level in 2019:

- 18 percent of Black learners
- 23 percent of Latinx learners
- 19 percent of Native/Indigenous learners

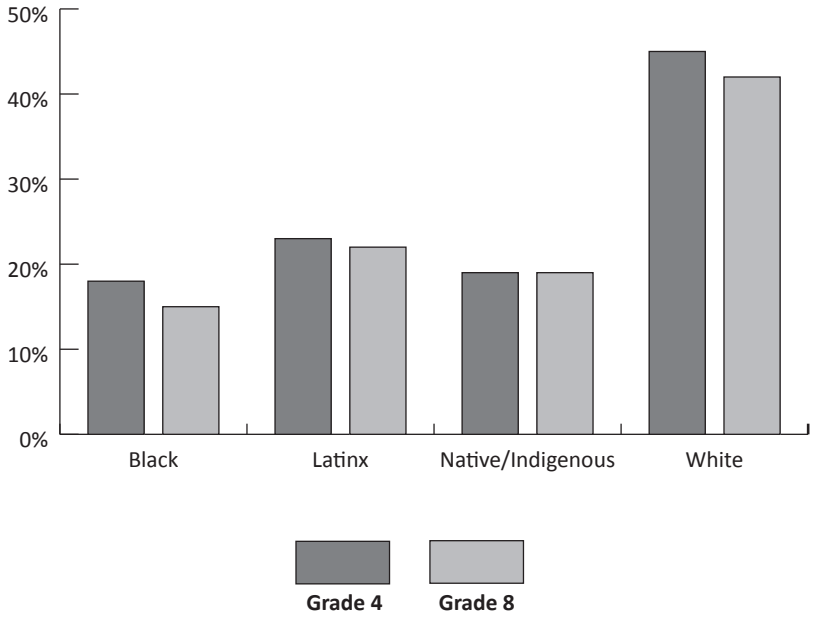
By eighth grade, those percentages shifted to the following:

- 15 percent of Black learners
- 22 percent of Latinx learners
- 19 percent of Native/Indigenous learners

For comparison, 45 percent of White fourth graders and 42 percent of White eighth graders scored at the proficient level.

Why?

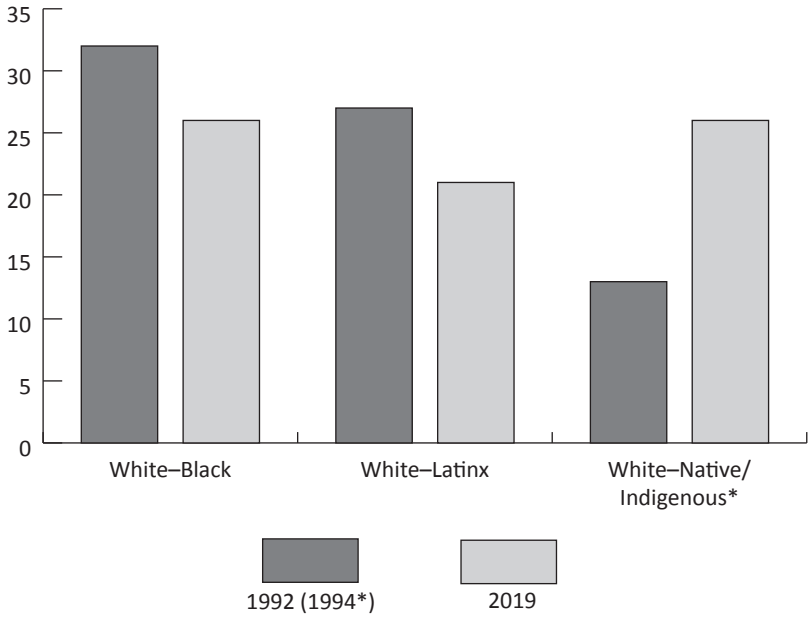
Figure 2.2. *Percentage of Learners Scoring Proficient on the NAEP*



The White–Black score gap was 26 points in 2019, compared to 32 points in 1992, prior to accommodation: a six-point reduction (see figure 2.3). Latinx learners saw the same reduction rate, with a gap of 21 points in 2019, compared to 27 points in 1992. The gap for Native learners did not shrink; rather, it doubled, from 13 points in 1994 to 26 points in 2019.

Why?

Figure 2.3. *Score Gap by Ethnicity on the NAEP (in points)*



The Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations

Former Secretary of Education Rod Paige was the first person to refer to *the soft bigotry of low expectations* during the launch of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. He asked, "Who among us would condemn a child to an inferior education? Which child? Whose child?" (Paige, as cited in Scherer 2004). Whether you search Merriam-Webster, Cambridge, Oxford, or dictionary.com, you will see consistency in the definition of **bigotry**. For our purposes here, it's defined as the stubborn, obstinate, unreasonable, and unreasoning intolerance of beliefs, opinions, creeds, or ways of life that differ from one's own.

bigotry—the stubborn, obstinate, unreasonable, and unreasoning intolerance of beliefs, opinions, creeds, or ways of life that differ from one's own

Let's unpack that. Analyze the key words in that definition of *bigotry*. Then take a look at the descriptors for the key words in figure 2.4. If we synthesize those to the simplest form, bigotry is a stuck, irrational, narrow **mindset** that opposes any set of norms other than one's own.

mindset—the attitudes and beliefs a person holds; a person's mental processes or way of thinking

Figure 2.4. *Key Words in the Definition of Bigotry and Accompanying Descriptors*

Key Word	Descriptors
stubborn	persistent, immovable, inflexible
obstinate	fixed, adamant, tenacious
unreasonable	irrational, arbitrary, not based in reason
unreasoning	not guided by good sense
intolerance	narrow-mindedness
belief	acceptance of the existence of something
opinion	view not necessarily based on fact
creed	religious belief, faith
way of life	culture, lifestyle

Paige's remarks (ibid.) came during the reading wars, where the findings of the National Reading Panel (2000) provided clear scientific evidence that specific practices were required if we were to teach every child to read. Pioneers in the research we now refer to as the science of reading—Marilyn Jager Adams, Barbara Foorman, Michael Pressley, Catherine Snow, Susan Burns, and so many others—taught us the importance of critical skills, instructional environments, and early developmental interactions that play significant roles in the process of learning to read. However, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, many educators denied the science and efficacy of explicit systematic instruction in reading based on the Big Five: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

As educators, when we examine our own practices, we have to ask whether or not we are stuck in a set of instructional practices or a belief in methods because it is comfortable for us, because it is *our* norm, and because we believe that if children don't learn that way, it is the fault of the learner, not the method or instructional practice.

Believing that there is only one approach to teaching reading to all children is a form of bigotry. Believing there is only one interpretation of a text is a form of bigotry. Believing that teaching to the invisible middle is an appropriate strategy is a form of bigotry. These beliefs and others like them that find their way into our instructional practices are dismissive of the data and devalue the diversity of cultures, diversity of thought, and diversity of life experiences children bring to our classrooms.

Researchers who study teaching and learning repeatedly validate that some instructional methods just do not work. This, believe it or not, is nothing new. In 1964, when President Lyndon B. Johnson declared a war on poverty, he viewed high-quality education for learners in low-wealth school systems and those eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch as a key element in winning that war. He said, "There is no more senseless waste than the waste of the brainpower and skill of those who are kept from college by economic circumstance" (Johnson 1964). Nearly 60 years later, the learners of concern today are the same group Johnson spoke of in 1964—those of low wealth, or those who are eligible for free- or reduced-price lunch.

In spite of all that we know to work, many systems still allow opinion and philosophy about teaching and learning to override the science, even when it comes to educating our most vulnerable learners. Let's look first at constructivism, or child-centered pedagogy. Even though it is widely researched and practiced, it is not scientifically supported as the best means of instruction. This is particularly true when it comes to learners with provision and achievement gaps—and even more true for those who are two or more years behind grade-level proficiency. We must consider the evidence that the educational establishment has a strong philosophical bias toward constructivism, even though the research tells us that it is bad for children (Carnine 2000). In fact, 56 percent of surveyed teachers self-reported a student-centered teaching philosophy, while only 15 percent considered it important to teach discrete skills and specific information to children regardless of outcomes (Kim and Axelrod 2005)—philosophy over science.

Why?

Teachers should never assume that learners are able to discover and test their own learning. They must never assume that learners who may have limited exposure to and

experience in the subjects they are learning can do so. Our most vulnerable learners tend to lack sufficient schema and breadth of knowledge. Without **explicit** instruction, they cannot make connections between concepts, particularly if they do not have the background knowledge to consider that a connection may exist. When teachers prefer a particular philosophy, regardless of learner outcomes, I would ask them to reflect on that preference. Is that method serving the learners—or the teacher? Is that instructional practice doing harm, allowing harm, or denying resources?

> **explicit**—specific; unequivocal; clearly stated with significant detail; when used in classroom instruction, leaving the learner no opportunity for confusion or a lack of understanding

Why?

When implementing a curriculum or choosing a specific methodology for the benefit of the learners, we need to consider many things. We must begin with the science. We must next consider culturally appropriate equitable instruction, multiple tiers of instruction, and Response to Intervention (or Instruction; RTI). We must seek increased levels of accountability. We must focus on educational research using experimental methods, even when it is diametrically opposite our philosophy. Educators must think beyond what is comfortable for themselves. To do no harm, allow no harm, and provide appropriate resources, educators must focus on what works for the learners in front of them. The first way to do this is by examining the existing research based on populations demographically similar to your own.

Taking Responsibility for Learners' Achievement

A second practice permits teachers to sometimes relinquish responsibility for their learners' achievement. This is referred to as **dysteachia**. The real crime in this practice is its willful application by the teacher. When a teacher engages in practices that make learning difficult or impossible for CLDLs, they are engaging in dysteachia. When a teacher fails to employ validated methodologies that are appropriate for the learner, the teacher is consciously denying the learner opportunities for progress. This amounts to both doing and allowing harm, because the educator fails to reduce the risk status of learners, even though they are conscious of their ability to reduce the risk.

dysteachia—the practice that permits teachers to sometimes relinquish responsibility for their learners' achievement; the conscious denial of learning opportunities through instructional practices that are not in the best interests of the learner

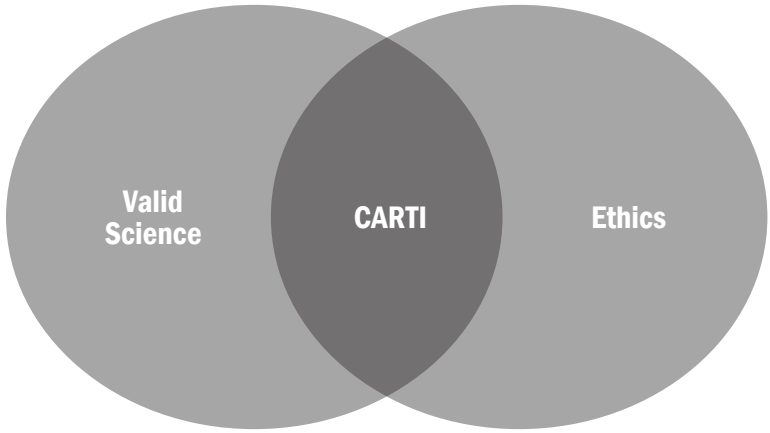
As free adults and educators, we have the privilege of choice. We choose our behaviors. We choose the instructional methods in our schools and classrooms. The methodology we use is selected to satisfy a desire. If this result serves our agenda but not the learners', if the methods are chosen for our convenience without regard to what is best for the learners, then the motivation for teaching becomes self-serving and thus dysteachia.

And then comes testing. There are times when the desire for a certain level of achievement on high-stakes assessments undermines accountability. This potentially drives dysteachia to an extreme of teaching to the test—or, worse, blatant cheating. That desire for a specific annual progress gain on high-stakes assessments or a school's ratings may tempt an educator away from doing what is right for their learners. In these instances, the educator puts their own interests ahead of those of the learners, essentially stating that it is more important to hold on to a status than to address the academic risk factors for CLDLs.

A Moral-Obligation Approach to Instruction

We have a moral obligation to teach the right way to benefit the children in front of us. Tiered instructional models, such as those popularized with RTI, provide a framework for doing so. In a CARTI model, the outcomes could never justify dysteachia. Both what is ethically right and the valid science dictate the appropriate choice of instructional materials and methods for teaching and learning. CARTI lives in the overlap (see figure 2.5). Consider CARTI from a perspective of just or unjust acts. Dysteachia qualifies as an act of aiding and abetting, an act of injury, and an act of theft. Ignoring the valid science—using materials and methods without scientific evidence that proves their efficacy in demographics matching those of your learners—is injurious, or doing harm. Not being ethical—allowing non-validated methods and materials to go unchallenged—is aiding and abetting, or allowing harm. Violating ethics by not providing instructional resources that work is akin to the theft of intellectual property. Engaging in dysteachia robs children of their academic potential.

Figure 2.5. *Framing the Moral Obligation to Teach to the Benefit of the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learner*



What Scientific Research Tells Us

In the midst of a pandemic, we have heard a lot about research, trials, and double-blind studies. These may have been new terms to many educators prior to the spring and summer of 2020. But these are terms that education researchers have used for years. The problem is that in education, gold-standard research is rare because the argument is often made that if what is being tested works, it would be unethical to withhold it from some learners who might benefit. Of course, the opposite argument is also true in education, just as it is in medicine during a pandemic. It would be unethical, even dangerous, to use an untested method with learners who might be harmed by it. In the early 2000s, research-validated practices designed for frontline educators were widely welcomed. Unfortunately, the pace at which the broad base of educators welcomes new, validated practices is too slow—again, philosophy over science.

So we are faced with a by-product of that philosophy: grade-level retention. The National Reading Panel (2000) encapsulated the science of reading in one comprehensive report. It taught us what we needed to do. It also reported that 95 percent of all learners may be taught to grade-level proficiency with appropriate instruction. Still, school districts nationwide repeatedly debate whether or not to retain learners at grade level. Retention, which has been shown to have a negative effect on achievement (Hattie 2009), is one of the many factors considered in creating an accountability system for states and districts (Frey et al. 2005). I won't even bother to argue the ethics of **social promotion**; I will say only that the principles and methods of CARTI are designed to eliminate the need for even considering social promotion for CLDLs.

social promotion—the practice of advancing learners to the next grade level based on attendance requirements, social interactions, and age rather than academic performance or the ability to meet benchmark proficiency

Terms such as *held back*, *repeating*, *retained*, and *left back* are used to reduce learners' anxiety about repeating a grade level (Frey et al. 2005). But to whose benefit, and to whose demise, is the practice of retaining children at grade level, or socially promoting them, if we do not change the way teaching and learning occur? Research findings are fairly consistent. They conclude that while some high-stakes assessment-based retention policies have been shown to produce short-term academic gains (Greene and Winters 2007; McCombs, Kirby, and Mariano 2009; Roderick, Jacob, and Bryk 2002; Winters and Greene 2006), the gains are not maintained over time (Dennis et al. 2010; Roderick and Nagaoka 2005; Winters and Greene 2012). Retained learners tend to experience greater academic achievement gaps than their non-retained peers. Retained learners have higher dropout rates than their non-retained peers. The short-term gain in self-esteem may be overshadowed by a lifetime stigma—the label of high school dropout. The principles and methods of CARTI are designed to eliminate this.

Research has also informed us of the bias in retention aimed at learners of color. In 2014, the retention rate for Black learners was 15 percent higher than the rate for White learners, and the rate for Latinx learners was 38 percent higher than the rate for White learners (Musu-Gillette et al. 2016). Discrimination against Black and Latinx learners in placement and retention decisions by educators, even when controlling for academic achievement, results in Black learners being about 4 percent and Latinx learners about 9 percent more likely to be retained in grade than White learners (Greene and Winters 2009).

Why?

If we retain learners in grade each year due to failure to meet benchmarks, we as educators should hold ourselves accountable for the failure to teach them the first year they are in grade. We are harming learners, punishing them in a manner that results in long-term social, emotional, academic, and economic damage. Instead, we should consider that our instructional approaches have failed. The disproportionate number of culturally and linguistically diverse children retained demonstrates our ethical breach of duty.