

Culturally Relevant, Socially and Emotionally Intelligent Leadership for Diverse School Communities

Marie Byrd¹, Tara Indar¹

¹ Leadership, Policy and Lifelong Learning, University of South Florida

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The U.S. Department of Education published a report entitled Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates that addressed harsh and unfair exclusionary discipline practices pertaining to children of color, LGBTQ students, and children with disabilities. This research aligns the five guiding principles provided by the DOE with emotional intelligence (EI) competencies, and culturally competent leadership (CC/R) behaviors. Each is grounded in continuous critical self-reflective practices. Social and emotional intelligence is explored through the presentation of information, ideas, and assumptions originating from varied perspectives in research. In addition, leadership for diverse school communities is shown to encompass leadership abilities aligned with intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence skill development. The alignment indicates a need for further leadership growth centering on leadership cultural competence and social and emotional intelligence continuous professional development.

Introduction

The racial/ethnic distribution of public school students in the United States has shifted dramatically, as students of diverse races/ethnicities represented 54% of the student population during the 2020 academic year (NCES, 2022). While the minority population represents the student majority, the teaching population experienced limited change, with 75% of the teachers being white/non-Hispanic and 84% reported as female (NCES, 2022). According to researchers, many students attending public schools lack cultural connections with teachers and leaders, which may contribute to their stagnation in academic development (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Lopes & Murphey et al., 2016). (Ladson-Billings, 1995a) As indicated by the U.S. Department of Education (2023, p. 4), “Current practices are in place that ostracize students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, English learners, students with disabilities, and students who identify as LGBTQ.” This national research supports culturally competent, relevant, and responsive teacher and leader practices, as well as social and emotional intelligence development within diverse school communities. In addition, researchers have continuously examined the gap in academic attainment outcomes among Black/African American and

Hispanic/Latino children from low socioeconomic families and communities as compared to white and Asian American students (NCES, 2022; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, p. 1995, 2010).

Khalifa (2018) defined the components of culturally responsive school leadership as 1) a clear understanding of cultural responsiveness; 2) having the acquired knowledge that cultural responsiveness will not flourish and succeed in schools without sustained efforts by school leaders to define and promote it; and 3) understanding that culturally responsive school leadership consists of several crucial leadership behaviors. Those behaviors are also inclusive of continuous critical self-reflection of professional practice, the development of culturally responsive teachers, the promotion of inclusive, anti-oppressive school environments, and the engagement with students' indigenous community contexts.

In addition, effective educational leadership requires a multitude of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills. In contrast to traditional school leadership, a list of challenges facing school leaders today includes becoming culturally, socially, and emotionally literate. These intrapersonal competencies will be aligned with research-based best practices of effective school leaders, allowing authentic engagement with students and families who represent varied racial/ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic home environments.

Background

Traditional educational leadership competencies previously encompassed school leadership skills that focused on management. A study centering on how principals affect students and schools (Grissom et al., 2000) provides a synthesis of quantitative and qualitative studies of 20 years of research centering on the four principal practices aligned with effective outcomes. The four practices identified are 1) engaging in high-leverage instructional activities, 2) building a productive culture and climate, 3) facilitating collaboration and learning communities, and 4) strategically managing personnel and resources (Grissom et al., 2021). The four areas encompass instructional leadership, collaborative and productive school culture and climate, and management.

In addition, there have been a plethora of school reform movements that have shaped the role of the school leader and caused fluctuations in the view of the primary responsibilities deemed as being the highest priority. Among the varied perspectives of effective whole-school reform, leader emotional intelligence within the role of transformational leadership has been an area of focus (Zurita-Ortega et al., 2019). Further, Day et al. (2016) conducted a review of international literature centering on successful school leadership and resolved that the critical attributes of effective leadership were inclusive of dimensions under the umbrella of social and emotional intelligence development:

- Defining and modeling common value

- Building relationships inside the school community
- Building relationships outside the school community
- Ensuring students' well-being and providing equitable access to support for all students
- Defining the vision, values, and direction
- Improving conditions for teaching and learning
- Redesigning the organization: aligning roles and responsibilities
- Enhancing effective teaching and learning
- Redesigning and enriching the curriculum
- Enhancing teacher quality - including succession planning (p. 6)

A study by Williams (2008) suggests a repertoire of specific competencies that may serve to differentiate principal efforts. The research further supports the development of an individual leader's cultural competence, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence skills that may aid in positively impacting students, teachers, parents, and community members (H. W. Williams, 2008). The competencies extend beyond the view of the leader as a mere school manager to further spotlight the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills needed for effectiveness.

Methodology

This analysis will initiate with a critical literature review identifying, analyzing, and aligning specified research concepts through the lens of effective school leadership practices for diverse school communities. The essential terms for the review were identified as cultural competence, cultural relevance, emotional intelligence, social intelligence, diverse school communities, and critical self-reflection. The following databases were utilized to accomplish an extensive review: ERIC, Scopus, Google Scholar, JSTOR, and EBSO. The recurring themes and research-based ideas that emerged from the critical analysis are then aligned with proposed practice-based indicators identified by the U. S. Department of Education in the following publication: *Five Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates* (U.S.DOE, 2023). The resulting analysis will align the U.S.D.O.E. suggested principles with research-based culturally competent/relevant leadership behaviors and social and emotionally intelligent leadership practices.

Review of Literature

The Role of Critical Self-Reflection

Critical self-reflection serves as the core of social, emotional, and cultural competence development. It may be defined as the sustained and intentional process of identifying and checking the accuracy and validity of one's perceptions through consistency and consciously considering perceived assumptions (Brookfield, 2017). In alignment, leadership growth may be related to the ability to learn, which also involves continuously examining underlying beliefs and assumptions. Two types of critical self-reflection within leadership have been identified as the following: 1) reflection in action, which takes place within an occurrence, and 2) reflection on action, which takes place upon the conclusion (Cheng & Corduneanu, 2015). Thus, leadership growth and development are deemed as being "related to one's ability to learn, and learning involves examining or challenging one's underlying beliefs and assumptions. Hence, the connection of leadership to learning positions the use of critical reflection pedagogies as viable approaches for developing leaders" (Sweet, 2023, p. 604). Continuous critical self-reflection has the potential to be regarded as the foundation of school leader professional growth and development, as it serves as the precursor for authentically leading and implementing sustainable change within a school community.

Critical self-reflection is a deliberate and strategic approach for educational leaders to recognize and reflect upon their biases and assumptions intricately woven into their cultural backgrounds. Aspiring school leaders participating in preparation programs have the opportunity to cultivate their comprehension of multicultural and social justice issues through purposeful activities that necessitate self-reflection; these activities could include crafting cultural autobiographies, conducting life history interviews, participating in workshops focused on reducing prejudice and maintaining journals for reflective analysis (Brown, 2004). Practicing educational leaders may also have the opportunity to engage in continuous professional development opportunities within the school district or via local, state, or national professional conferences.

As an introspective endeavor that facilitates a comprehensive grasp of the multifaceted challenges and intricate relationships embedded in educational environments (Branson, 2007, 2010), critical self-reflection has the potential to be deemed as a foundational approach for personal and professional growth. It has also been determined to be foundational in the development of a profound sense of critical consciousness, which, in turn, nurtures the growth of a profound sense of heightened awareness (Brown, 2005). Hence, critical self-reflection assumes a pivotal role in guiding leaders not only to recognize but also to gain a comprehensive understanding of their biases and assumptions rooted in personal cultural backgrounds; this newly acquired awareness empowers leaders with the acumen and capability to adeptly

recognize and address prevailing social justice challenges within their roles as educational leaders (Furman, 2012). Thus, continuous critical self-reflection may be considered one's continuous personal and professional development throughout the extension of leadership roles.

Social and Emotional Intelligence

Intrapersonal areas of social and emotional growth and development have been denoted as a facet of multiple intelligences that vary among individuals (Gardner, 1993; Goleman, 1995; Mayer et al., 2016). "Social intelligence competency is the ability to recognize, understand, and use emotional information about others that leads to or causes effective or superior performance" (Boyatzis, 2009, cited in Emmerling & Boyatzis, 2012, p. 8). Broadly stated, social intelligence is the process of socially constructing reality (Sternberg, 2020, as cited in Sternberg & Kostić, 2020). Drigas and Papoutsi (2018, p. 4) define emotional intelligence as the ability to identify, understand, and use emotions positively to manage anxiety, communicate well, empathize, overcome issues, solve problems, and manage conflicts. According to the emotional intelligence (EI) model, it is the perception, evaluation, and management of emotions in yourself and others (Drigas & Papoutsi, 2018; Mayer et al., 2008). Emotional intelligence in leadership may be defined according to the attributes identified by Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, and Sitarenios (2003):

1. Perceiving emotion: detecting emotions in faces, pictures, music, etc.
2. Facilitating thought with emotion: employing emotional information in thinking
3. Understanding emotions: understanding emotional information
4. Managing emotions: managing emotions for personal and interpersonal development (p. 97)

As the view of effective leadership continues to advance in the field of education, research is increasingly recognizing the critical role that social-emotional learning plays in the holistic development of young minds. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2020), social-emotional development is a process that empowers individuals of all ages to acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to navigate their emotions, set and achieve positive goals, show empathy for others, cultivate positive relationships, and make responsible decisions (<https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/>) Mahfouz and Gordon (2021) outline five specific approaches in which social and emotional learning (SEL) may benefit educational leaders in their roles, including promoting their overall well-

being, facilitating effective leadership, fostering healthy relationships, establishing successful family and community partnerships, and enabling the successful implementation of SEL practices. By prioritizing SEL in leadership, educational institutions may create a culture of emotional intelligence, empathy, and responsible decision-making, benefiting students and staff alike.

Additionally, studies conducted by Williams (2007) indicate that exceptional principals who work in urban areas with economically disadvantaged, minority, special needs, and/or second language learner students develop emotional and social intelligence. This finding further underscores the value of social-emotional development relative to leadership positions within diverse educational institutions. As a school leader, developing social and emotional intelligence effectively enhances the capacity to lead staff and students (CASEL, 2020). Sadiku et al. (2020, p. 202) indicate that it is only possible to be an effective leader with skills in emotional intelligence. Through leadership practices that encompass the integration of social and emotional skills development, leaders may inspire, motivate, and influence others to be their best selves (Mahfouz et al., 2019).

A focus on enhancing social and emotional intelligence to further the academic, social, emotional, and cultural well-being of the school demonstrates the capacity required school leaders to develop the core competencies that have been deemed as fundamental for them to further develop empathy, an awareness of the diversity within the school, and a solid commitment to fostering the potential of others (Jacobson, 2021; Crawford, 2007). By acquiring emotional and social communication skills and interpreting messages from others, leaders may create a welcoming and inclusive school environment that promotes the growth and development of every student. Riggio and Reichard outlined an emotional and social skills model that summarizes the necessary traits for emotional and social communication, including expression, recognition, decoding of messages from others, and regulation and control of communication behaviors (2008). The model proposes three emotional skills: 1) emotional expressiveness, emotional sensitivity, and emotional control, and 2) three social skills: social expressiveness, social sensitivity, and social control (Riggio & Reichard, 2008, p. 171). The first phase, involving the expressiveness of social and emotional skills, allows the school leader to express empathy and understanding with teachers, students, and community members, which is foundational in developing a positive whole school culture and climate. Such enhancements in social and emotional intelligence have the capacity to positively influence the whole school community, inclusive of students, families, teachers, staff, and community partners. In addition,

Continuous growth in social and emotional intelligence is critical to effective leadership.

Managing emotions is fundamental for school leaders to achieve their goals, cope with the challenges of their position, and make positive changes in their schools (Blak Hourani et al., 2021 & Beatty & Brew, 2004). Sensitivity

to diversity and a dedication to serving others and developing their abilities are essential qualities that each educational leader should possess. The manner in which educational leaders manage their emotions and interact with parents, students, and staff members may not only affect their personal well-being but also have the potential to positively enhance the environment and values of their schools (Beatty, 2007). By cultivating emotional and social intelligence, educational leaders may conceivably have the capacity to develop stronger relationships and promote a nurturing and supportive school environment where everyone can thrive. A study by Williams (2007) indicates that exceptional educational leaders who work in urban areas with socially and economically disadvantaged, minority, special needs, and/or second language learner students possess social and emotional intelligence. This finding further underscores the value of social-emotional development relative to leadership positions within educational institutions. As a school leader, it is vital to develop social and emotional intelligence to effectively lead teachers, staff, and students (CASEL, 2020). By leading with social and emotional skills, leaders may inspire, motivate, and influence others to be their best selves (Mahfouz et al., 2019). Thus, an effective school leader has the potential to center on endeavors that encompass a welcoming school climate and positive culture, and the end result is centered on the development of student's academic, social, and emotional well-being.

Culturally Competent and Relevant Leadership

Cultural competence in educational leadership serves as a precursor to the development of culturally relevant leadership. Cultural competence may be defined as

a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. The word “culture” is used because it implies the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of a racial, ethnic, religious, or social group. The word competence is used because it implies having the capacity to function effectively (Cross et al., 1989, p. 13).

Functioning effectively within varied school communities is foundational for school leaders who lead schools where the student and family population's race/ethnicity and/or socio-economic status does not mirror their own. A culturally competent school leader's seamless nature is embedded in the ability to appreciate the uniqueness of varied community cultures. According to Barakat et al. (2021, p. 486), cultural competence in education relies immensely on research conducted in teacher education. Researchers have previously explored varying elements of the alignment between recognizing and celebrating student culture and their academic

achievement through research focusing on culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 2006) and multicultural education et al., Banks & McGee, 2004; Sleeter, 1995). In addition, researchers have centered their attention on culturally responsive practices of the teacher (Gay, 2000) and caring-centered multicultural education (Pang, 2010). For the purpose of this critical analysis, the co-author, M. Byrd, developed the following definition of culturally competent leadership within K-12 educational settings

1. The school leader's ability to self-reflect and self-critique personal belief systems about themselves, individuals, and groups of people within the school community.
2. The school leader's knowledge, understanding, acceptance, and appreciation of diversity within the school community.
3. The school leader's ability to demonstrate effective leadership behaviors that align with the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of student differences within the school community.
4. The school leader's ability to effectively lead within varied cultural settings within the school community while maintaining the growth and development of all students as the primary area of focus.

As a component of cultural competence, culturally relevant school leadership is built upon antiracist and cultural adeptness literature, encompassing theory, research, and practice (Horsford et al., 2011). It serves a vital role in shaping the school culture by instigating processes and providing support across the educational system to challenge prevailing social structures (Fraise & Brooks, 2015; Horsford et al., 2011; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; McCray & Beachum, 2011). Leadership draws from Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1995b) culturally relevant pedagogy, which emphasizes creating a school environment where students excel academically and develop cultural competence and critical consciousness to challenge existing social norms.

Within the realm of education, which is inherently political, numerous issues, policies, and factors impact the effectiveness and experience of schools (M. Brooks & Brooks, 2019). Leaders must comprehend the intricate ideological, philosophical, and political assumptions permeating their work contexts (A. H. Brooks & Normore, 2010). According to Horsford et al. (2011), culturally relevant school principals possess the skill to identify and navigate political contexts, particularly concerning educational applications and policy implementation.

Cultural relevance in education is inclusive of leader pedagogy that caters to students from diverse backgrounds, supports teachers' professional development and encourages the use of culturally relevant pedagogies in students' lives (Ezzani & Brooks, 2019). These pedagogies empower students

by cultivating critical social awareness, enabling them to identify, understand, and challenge inequitable social norms and practices (Banks, 1993; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). By incorporating cultural references, culturally relevant pedagogy engages students socially, emotionally, and politically, enhancing their awareness, talents, knowledge, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1994). By supporting teacher integration of cultural references within teacher pedagogical approaches, school leaders allow diverse student populations to experience elements of their cultures within the school setting. Thus, a deeper connection between school and home develops.

Culturally relevant leaders are introspective about their journeys (Horsford et al., 2011) and display self-awareness (Khalifa et al., 2016). Such self-awareness, a crucial prerequisite for learners in multicultural programs (Brown, 2004), involves acknowledging one's beliefs, assumptions, and biases toward diverse students and working to dismantle them (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). Furthermore, developing a positive sense of self, including self-awareness and acceptance of their ethnic group, is essential for leaders to be open and understanding towards other ethnic groups (Banks, 1994). Freire (1994) describes critical consciousness as taking functional responsibility for self-discovery and developing social awareness, which can be facilitated through self-exploration of one's culture and societal experiences (Brown, 2004). Principals who support marginalized students need to address and break down barriers that negatively affect their learning (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). Failure to reflect on one's biases and adapt the curriculum accordingly perpetuates the dominance of a particular culture (M. Brooks & Brooks, 2019) and has lasting adverse effects.

Educational leaders are responsible for constructing a socially just and equitable school culture as part of their professional duty. This involves overseeing a positive school environment that embraces all students, regardless of their backgrounds (M. Brooks & Brooks, 2019), and fostering culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay, 2010). School leaders lacking sufficient knowledge and skills in culturally relevant leadership practices may find integrating diverse experiences and backgrounds into the school culture challenging, causing neglect of underserved students' cultural experiences and depriving them of equitable education (Terrell & Lindsey, 2009). As indicated by the studies cited, it is foundationally imperative that students experience elements of their cultures within school walls as it may allow for a transformation of the knowledge and skills obtained to their home cultures. Culturally relevant school practices may alleviate the compartmentalization of knowledge by underserved students, such as in school and at home.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation for culturally relevant, socially and emotionally intelligent leadership for diverse school communities encompasses leadership abilities aligned with intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence skill development. Critical self-reflection is the initial stage of development as it is

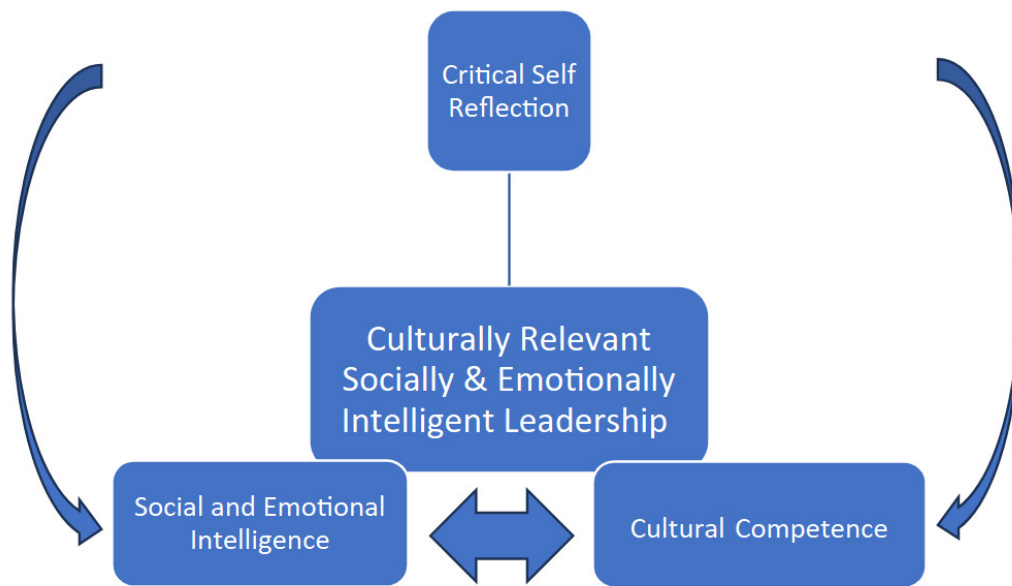


Figure 1. Culturally Relevant, Socially and Emotionally Intelligent Leadership

Figure 2. Five Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates

Number	Principle
1	Foster a sense of belonging through a positive, safe, welcoming, and inclusive school environment.
2	Support the social, emotional, physical, and mental health needs of all students through evidence-based strategies.
3	Adequately support high-quality teaching and learning by increasing educator capacity
4	Recruit and retain a diverse educator workforce
5	Ensure the fair administration of student discipline policies in ways that treat students with dignity and respect (including through systemwide policy and staff development and monitoring strategies.

U.S. Department of Education (2023). Retrieved from: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/guiding-principles.pdf>

foundational and continuous throughout the process. Social and emotional intelligence and cultural competence development is possible through sustained critical self-reflection throughout leadership practices (See Figure 1).

Effective School Leadership for Diverse Student Populations

Results

The U.S. Department of Education (2023) underscored the imperative of fostering safe, inclusive, and equitable school climates in *Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates*. Recognizing the detrimental impact of punitive disciplinary measures and the disproportionate burden they place on marginalized groups such as children of color, LGBTQ students, and those with disabilities, the Department advocates for a shift toward holistic support systems. By prioritizing students' social, emotional, physical, academic, and mental well-being, schools can cultivate environments where all students feel valued, safe, and empowered to thrive.

Meeting the needs of the whole child requires attending to students' social, emotional, and cultural needs. "Research suggests that some of the disparities in student discipline can be attributed to differences in subjective interpretations of behaviors despite the absence of significant objective differences. For example, Black students are more likely than their white peers to receive disciplinary action for offenses that are subjectively characterized, like disrespect, disruption, or defiance" (U.S.D.O.E., 2023, p. 5). To address the discipline disparities in American public schools, the U. S. Department of Education developed five guiding principles identified to address exclusionary discipline practices that contribute to discipline disparities among underserved students (*see Figure 2*). The five guiding principles consist of 1) fostering a sense of belonging, 2) supporting the social, emotional, physical, and mental health of students, 3) increasing teacher capacity for high-quality teaching/learning, 4) recruiting and retaining a diverse educator workforce, and 5) ensuring the fair administration of student discipline policies in ways that treat students with dignity and respect (2023). The principles challenge teachers and leaders to develop individual social and emotional intelligence and cultural competence and engage in culturally relevant practices. The principles also align with meeting the whole child's needs rather than centering interactions solely on academic achievement. Culturally relevant school leaders are responsible for modeling behaviors that enhance the school culture, climate, and adult capacity to ensure students' cultural, social, and emotional development.

Discussion of Results

By integrating emotional intelligence indicators, as outlined by Goleman (2004), with the components of cultural competence and culturally relevant leadership, we established a solid foundation for aligning these two crucial focus areas. Goleman's five critical components of emotional intelligence are inclusive of one area dedicated to social skills, therefore allowing for the inclusion of social intelligence. Emotional intelligence (EI) consists of self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills (Goleman, 2004). Goleman's critical components of EI will be referenced during this discussion. The culturally competent/relevant indicators were aggregated for a more robust analysis. Self-awareness (knowing one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, and goals and their impact on others) also entailed the emotional intelligence hallmarks of self-confidence and self-assessment. The alignment with the culturally competent/relevant leadership components of self-reflection and self-critique is of note. Therefore, self-awareness serves as a component of EI and cultural competence as both entail consideration of the self (See Figure 3).

Further alignments involved the EI component of self-regulation, which is defined as controlling or redirecting disruptive impulses and moods and includes openness for self-criticism. The cultural competence component of self-critique of personal belief systems aligns with the EI indicator. The motivation EI hallmark of a solid drive to achieve may also be interpreted as

Figure 3. Five critical components of emotional intelligence: Culturally Competent /Relevant Leadership Components

Emotional Intelligence (EI) Component	EI Definition	EI Hallmarks	Culturally Competent /Relevant Leadership Components
Self-awareness	Knowing one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, drives, values, and goals—and their impact on others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-confidence • Realistic self-assessment • Self-deprecating sense of humor • Thirst for constructive criticism 	Engage in self-reflection and self-critique of personal belief systems about themselves, individuals, and groups of people within the school community.
Self-Regulation	Controlling or redirecting disruptive impulses and moods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfort with ambiguity • Trustworthiness and integrity • Openness to change. • Thirst for constructive criticism 	Engage in self-reflection and self-critique of personal belief systems about themselves, individuals, and groups of people within the school community.
Motivation	Relishing achievement for its own sake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong drive to achieve • Optimism, even in the face of failure • Organizational commitment 	Organizational commitment to maintain the growth and development of all students as the primary area of focus
Empathy	Understanding other people's emotional makeup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expertise in building and retaining talent • Cross-cultural sensitivity • Service to clients and customers 	Ability to demonstrate effective leadership behaviors that are in alignment with the understanding and appreciation of student differences within the school community
Social Skills	Building rapport with others to move them in desired directions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectiveness in leading change • Persuasiveness • Expertise in building and leading teams 	Ability to effectively lead within varied cultural settings in the school community while maintaining the growth and development of all students as the primary area of focus

Goleman, D. (2004). What makes a leader? *Harvard Business Review*, pp. 82, 82–91.

an alignment with the organizational commitment to maintain the growth and development of all students as the primary area of focus. The empathy EI's cross-cultural sensitivity may be affiliated with the cultural competence component of effective leadership behaviors that align with the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of student differences within the school community. Lastly, the social skills EI, which involves building rapport with others to move them in desired directions, may be likened to the culturally competent indicator of effectively leading within varied cultural settings in the school community.

Figure four highlights the guiding principles outlined by the U.S. DOE to address disparities in disciplinary practices and foster inclusivity for marginalized student groups, as identified in their publication (U.S. DOE, 2023, p. 3). These principles are harmonized with Goleman's (2007) five emotional intelligence components.

The first U.S. DOE principle focuses on nurturing a sense of belonging by cultivating a positive, safe, and inclusive school environment for students of color, LGBTQ students, and those with disabilities, thereby aligning with the importance of social skills and effective teaching (refer to Figure 4). The second and fifth principles emphasized by the U.S. DOE underscore empathy and the recognition of student diversity. In contrast, the third and fourth principles emphasize the significance of social skills and adept leadership in navigating diverse cultural landscapes within the school community while highlighting each individual's comprehensive growth and development.

Discussion

The alignment of the U.S. Department of Education's Guiding Principles, Emotional Intelligence (EI) competencies, and Culturally Competent/Relevant Leadership (CC/R) behaviors may be considered subjective. However, the extent of the analysis uncovered the skills in practice that the individual teacher solely constructs. Professional development centering on concepts beyond enhancing student achievement scores to focus on acknowledging the whole child aligns with the guiding principles and current research. Thus, it is imperative for teachers and leaders to view each of the *Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates* identified by the U.S. DOE (2023) through the lens of further whole school development centering on cultural competence (relevance) and social and emotional intelligence continuous professional development.

Cultural competence and social and emotional intelligence stand as multifaceted pillars within the landscape of professional growth, delineating individualized trajectories for each practitioner. They encapsulate intricate nuances, weaving together personal experiences, societal contexts, and ongoing learning processes. Unlike conventional passive learning methodologies, these dimensions cannot be effectively transmitted through mere information absorption. Instead, they beckon for dynamic engagement, inviting practitioners to immerse themselves in active exploration and continuous reflection.

Therefore, the role of the principal encompasses a personal and moral duty to engage in the self-reflective process, as the role of the school leader is inclusive of creating a school culture that is socially just and equitable. As indicated by Senge (1990), leaders are responsible for building organizations where people (teachers, students, and staff) continually expand their capabilities to understand complexity, clarify vision, and improve shared mental models that they are responsible for learning. Principals are responsible for fostering a positive school climate that embraces all students, no matter their background (M. Brooks & Brooks, 2019). The leader's

Figure 4. U.S. Department of Education Guiding Principles (USDOE) Alignment: Emotional Intelligence (EI); Culturally Competent/ Relevant Leadership (CC/R)

Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Social Awareness	Social Skill
USDOE: <i>Recruit and retain a diverse educator workforce</i>	USDOE: <i>Foster a sense of belonging through a positive, safe, welcoming, and inclusive school environment.</i>	USDOE: <i>Support the social, emotional, physical, and mental health needs of all students through evidence-based strategies. Ensure the fair administration of student discipline policies in ways that treat students with dignity and respect (including through systemwide policy and staff development and monitoring strategies).</i>	USDOE: <i>Adequately support high-quality teaching and learning by increasing educator capacity. Recruit and retain a diverse educator workforce</i>
CC/R: Engage in self-reflection and self-critique of personal belief systems about themselves, individuals, and groups of people within the school community	CC/R: Ability to effectively lead within varied cultural settings in the school community while maintaining the growth and development of all students as the primary area of focus.	CC/R: Ability to demonstrate effective leadership behaviors that align with the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of student differences within the school community.	CC/R: Ability to effectively lead within varied cultural settings within the school community while maintaining the growth and development of all students as the primary area of focus
EI: <u>Emotional Self-Awareness</u> : the ability to read and understand your emotions as well as recognize their impact on work, performance, relationships <u>Accurate self-assessment</u> : realistic evaluation of your strengths and limitations <u>Self-confidence</u> : a strong and positive sense of self-worth	EI: <u>Self-control</u> : ability to keep disruptive emotions and impulses under control <u>Trustworthiness</u> : a consistent display of honesty and integrity <u>Conscientiousness</u> : ability to manage yourself and your responsibilities. <u>Adaptability</u> : skill at adjusting to changing situations and overcoming obstacles <u>Achievement Orientation</u> : drive to meet an internal standard of excellence <u>Initiative</u> : Readiness to seize opportunities	EI: <u>Empathy</u> : skill at sensing other people's emotions, understanding their perspective, and taking an active interest in their concerns <u>Organizational awareness</u> : the ability to read the currents of organizational life, build decision networks, and navigate politics. <u>Service orientation</u> : the ability to recognize and meet customers' needs.	EI: <u>Visionary Leadership</u> : the ability to take charge and inspire with a compelling vision. <u>Influence</u> : the ability to wield a range of persuasive tactics. <u>Developing Others</u> : propensity to bolster the abilities of others through feedback and guidance. <u>Communication</u> : skill at listening and sending clear, convincing, and well-tuned messages. <u>Change Catalyst</u> : proficiency in initiating new ideas and leading people in a new direction. <u>Conflict Management</u> : the ability to de-escalate disagreements and orchestrate resolutions. <u>Building Bonds</u> : proficiency at cultivating and maintaining a web of relationships. <u>Teamwork and Collaboration</u> : Competence in promoting cooperation and building teams.

Goleman, D. (2007). Leadership that gets results. *Harvard Business Review*, March-April, p.2-16; U.S. DOE (2023). U.S. Department of Education (2023). *Guiding Principles for Creating Safe, Inclusive, Supportive, and Fair School Climates*.

ethical responsibility to engage in continuous personal development results in the valuing and encouraging cultural appreciation and understanding of the school community's diverse groups (M. Brooks & Brooks, 2019). In addition, according to Williams (2008), emotional intelligence competencies are associated with individual self-management. School leaders who have developed their EI competencies can better identify challenging and realistic

school improvement goals, focus amid instability, engage in decision-making that centers on creative solutions, and further their capacity to establish goals to benefit all students (H. W. Williams, 2008). The principal's commitment to ongoing personal growth and cultivating cultural competence and emotional intelligence enriches their leadership. It fosters a more inclusive and supportive educational environment for all stakeholders.

Conclusion

The embodiment of culturally relevant social and emotional development for school leaders of diverse school communities consists of continuous engagement in self-reflective practices. Intrapersonal and interpersonal skills provide the foundation for the continuity of improved practices. Being consciously aware of previously conceived personal perspectives about others during daily interactions with diverse people and perspectives is necessary for modifying former conceptions when encountering those who do not share the same race, ethnicity, gender, and culture. A leader who is culturally competent will incorporate and support a pedagogy of education that is culturally relevant for students of all varying backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and abilities. Cultural relevance empowers students and engages them socially and emotionally by including cultural references to develop their awareness, talents, knowledge, and attitudes (Ladson-Billings, 1994). According to the U.S. DOE, school climates that reflect a holistic understanding of student development, inclusive of conditions that are safe, inclusive, supportive, and fair for all students, are effective in meeting the student's social and emotional well-being (U.S. DOE, 2023). If school leaders facilitate the support and recognition of the social, emotional, and cultural facets of the students and school community, the potential for conditions that are safe, supportive, and inclusive for students to achieve academically may lead to a positive effect on the long-standing academic attainment gap.

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