

Cultural Awareness As a Board Member



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What is Culture?

- Culture is a body of values, customs, and ways of looking at the world shared by a group of people through generations.
- A culture can be based on the following:
 - Ethnicity or race
 - Gender
 - Age
 - Locality or geography



What is Culture?

- Religion
- Nationality or immigrant status
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Income
- Education
- Occupation
- Employment organization



What is Cultural Awareness?

- Learning and developing sensitivity to the characteristics of another culture.
- Being aware that cultural differences and similarities exist and have an effect on values, learning, and behavior.
- The ultimate goal is to appreciate the similarities and differences of another culture without judgment or assigning values.

Why Should You Care About Culture as a Board Member?

- Culture matters!
 - Focus on the students
 - Recognize and adapt to differences
 - Effectively communicate
 - Create trusting relationships
 - Address your school district's needs
 - Be a better representative



Why Should You Care About Culture as a Board Member?

- It's in your own self interest to care
 - Personal satisfaction
 - Get re-elected
- It makes your work more interesting and rewarding
- It can save you a lot of agony



Some Statistics

- Dominant culture
- In 1984, approximately 1 in 4 school children were minority students
- By 2020, nearly 1 in 2 children are expected to be minority students
- In the 25 largest American school districts, minority students comprised about 72 percent of the total school enrollment in 1994



New Mexico Public Schools

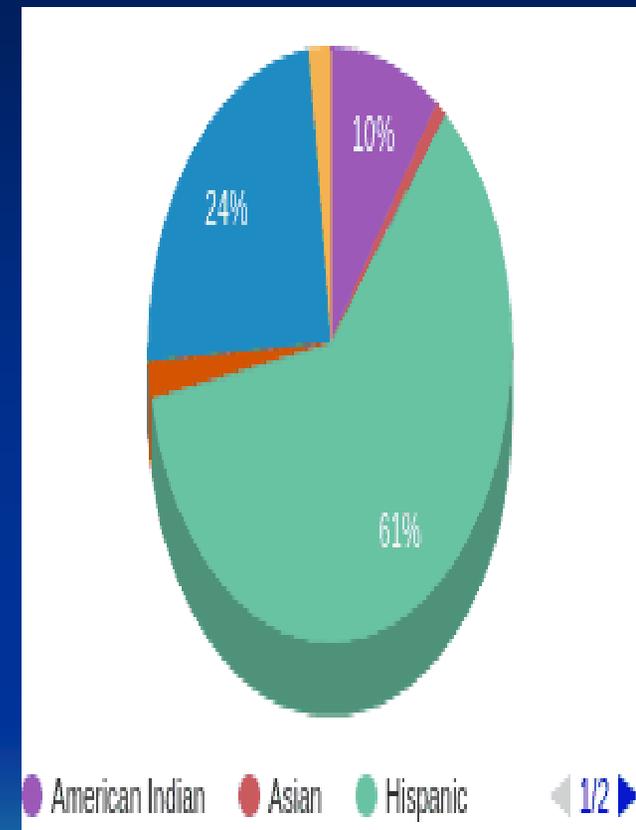
- New Mexico is the #50 largest school system in the United States, serving 58,579 students across the top 247 public schools for the 2018-19 school year.
- New Mexico public schools have a diversity score of 0.38, which is higher than the national average of 0.32.

New Mexico Public Schools

- The most diverse school district in New Mexico is Magdalena Municipal School District.
- There are 9 Blue Ribbon Schools, 34 charter schools and 3 special education schools.
- Minority enrollment is 74% (majority Hispanic) and the student:teacher ratio is 15:1.

New Mexico Public Schools

- Student by Ethnicity (NM) School Average
- American Indian 12%
- Asian 1%
- Hispanic 57%
- Black 2%
- White 26%
- Two or more races 1%
- Unknown 1%

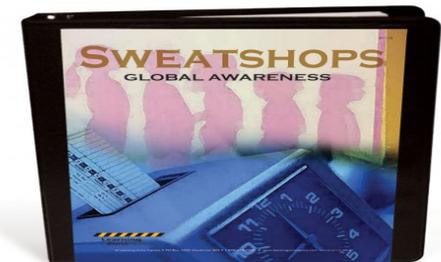


Private School Minority Statistics in New Mexico

- New Mexico private schools are composed of approximately 51% minority students (2018-19)

Cultural Awareness Does NOT Mean Stereotyping

- Which occurs when cultural characteristics are oversimplified and exaggerated
 - Results in false assumptions
 - Trivializes, marginalizes, patronizes, and insults
- Respect is required
- Interest and willingness to understand and accept differences



Considering Cultural Differences in Your Work as a Board Member

- Are the events viewed differently by people from different cultural contexts?
- How is conflict viewed?
- Is hierarchy valued?
- Is formality valued?
- How much do personal relationships matter?
- How will others view you

Considering Cultural Differences in Your Work as a Board Member

- How acceptable is it to show emotion or to talk about emotion?
- How much is typically said in words, and how much is left to implication or context?
- What does body language communicate?
- Which is more important – the individual or the group?



How is your cultural awareness?

- Do you make assumptions?
- Do you have a conscious or unconscious bias?
- Do you form opinions about students, parents, staff, administrators, community members before really getting to know them?
- Do you have predetermined feelings or notions about a particular culture without truly having an understanding of that culture?

Assessing Your Cultural Awareness

- What are some of the different cultures in your school district?
- What characteristics come to mind when you think of each group?
- Where did these impressions come from?
- How do you treat people based on these assumptions?

Scenario #1

- Your fellow board member tells you there are six new Asian families with school age children moving into your school district. Another board members says, “Good! Maybe now we can take first place at the math and science fairs.”

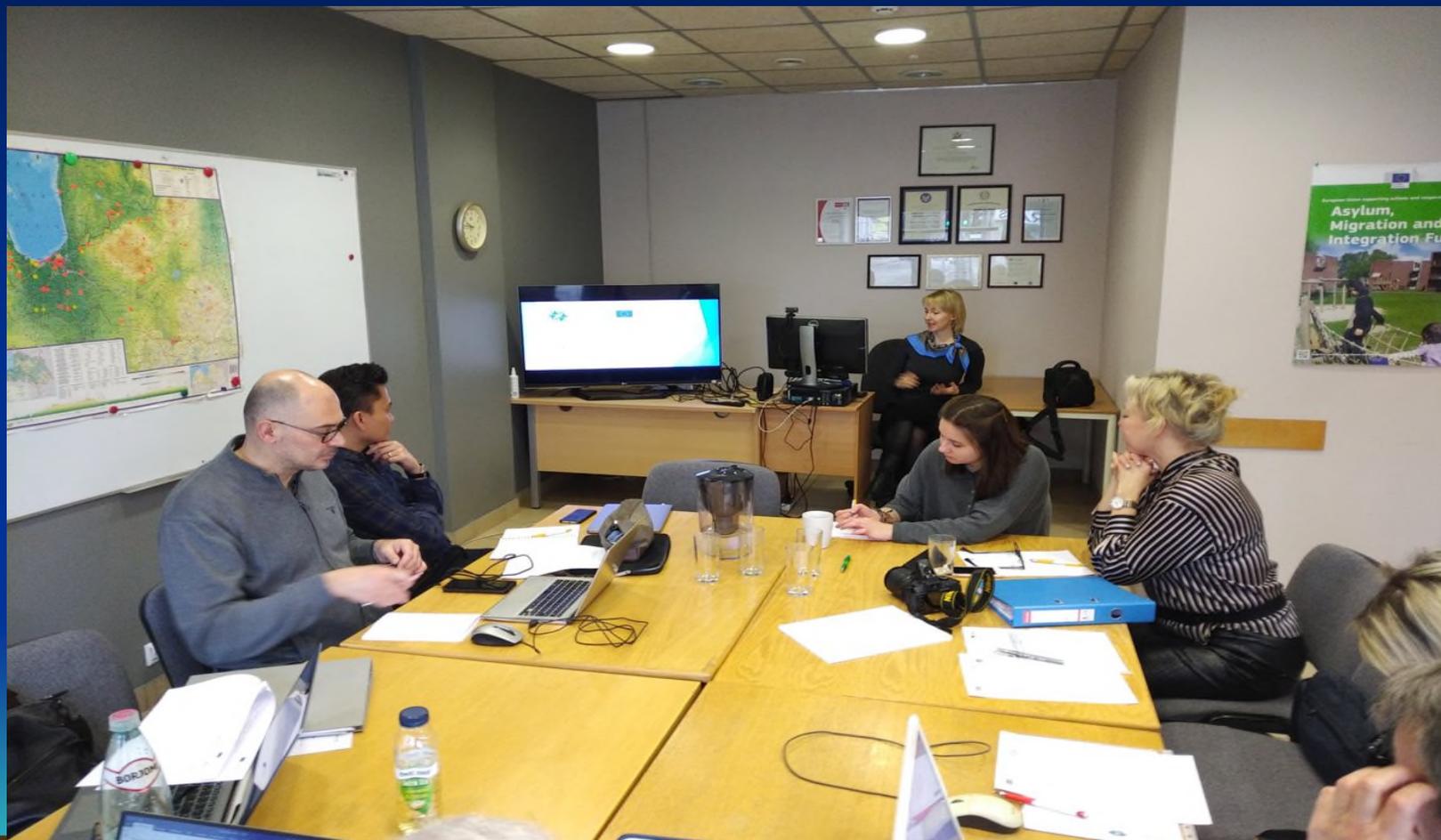
Scenario #2

- During a board meeting, a parent raises concerns about changes in his/her child's school administration. The parent speaks softly, in a monotone, and won't look anyone in the eye. Your fellow board member says, "I don't listen to anyone who won't look me in the eye."

Scenario #3

- Before the start of the high school district basketball game, a referee tells your Native American student he must cut his long braid if he wants to play in the game.

What can you do?



Develop Multi-Cultural Skills

- Everything we do, regarding time, personal space, body language, voice, volume, small talk, eye contact, hygiene, and eating is shaped by our culture
- Do not interpret the behavior of others through your own culture's lens

Develop Multi-Cultural Skills

- Attitude/awareness
 - Understand your own culture and values
 - Acknowledge them
 - Don't impose them



Develop Multi-Cultural Skills

- Knowledge
 - Research and learn
 - Prepare

Cultural Competence Continuum



Develop Multi-Cultural Skills

- Skills
 - Be open-minded
 - Be able to adapt
 - Be respectful
 - Recognize your limitations
 - Don't try to be someone else



Develop Multi-Cultural Skills

- Be a role model
 - Express positive value in whatever appears “foreign”
 - Demonstrate a positive attitude of new cultures
 - Ensure that the policies your board develops and the decisions it makes respect all cultures in your school district
 - Welcome all members of your school district community
 - Don't prejudge



Develop Multi-Cultural Skills

- “People fail to get along because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don’t know each other. They don’t know each other because they have not properly communicated with each other.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.



QUESTIONS

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