

Eric Neal:

Welcome to the State Support Team 11 podcast. I'm your host, Eric Neal and today we are joined by Dr. Antoinette Miranda. Dr. Miranda is a Professor and Director at the Ohio State University School Psychology program. She also represents District Six on the State Board of Education and is the Interim Chair of Teaching and Learning at Ohio State. Welcome Dr. Miranda. How are you today?

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

I'm fine. It's good to be here.

Eric Neal:

Great to have you. Today we're talking about cultural competency. Can you tell us a little bit about cultural competency and the work that you do at Ohio State?

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

Yeah. The simple definition for cultural competency is the ability to understand and interact effectively with the people from other cultures. It's oftentimes thought of as a three-legged stool and we can talk about that a little bit later. But I think that is kind of the simplest definition.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

In a more detailed version, it's really sort of seen as the values, behaviors, and attitudes, and practices within a system such as a school system, organization program, or among individuals which enables them to work effectively across cultures.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And at Ohio State, I think the significance that the work that I've done with cultural competence is that the School Psychology program has an urban and social justice focus. And so we really train our students to be culturally competent so that they can go anywhere to work, whether it's a rural, suburban, or urban district. Can we find that to be really important?

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And so some of the things we do are making sure that it's embedded in all of our classes, that the practicum experience they have is in our urban school district. But one of the things I always tell our students, even though it's an urban program, you're going to be able to take the skills that we've given you to any type of district, because a lot of it is really about poverty.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

So, I feel pretty confident in the training we have and many of our students, particularly that have gone through rural districts, have found the training to be very beneficial in helping them to be able to work with students and be able to look at students through not only their lens, but through the lens of students.

Eric Neal:

Yeah. That definitely resonates with me. It's something that I think is beneficial to anybody really that's working in any field, but especially education. You've just been reelected to the State Board of Education. Congratulations. How does this work impact what you do with the board?

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

Yes. Yeah. Thank you. And I want to thank everybody that voted for me and had the confidence in reelecting me. The four years that I've been on the board, I think the notion of cultural competence is really important because in the State of Ohio, we have really diverse districts.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

We have over 600 districts that are in urban, rural, suburban areas and I think in order to be effective, we have to understand how the districts are different and how the populations are different, because populations need different things, whether you're in a rural area, whether you're in an urban area. So, I think having cultural competence helps you make better decisions that benefit all the students of Ohio.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And so we've really been really doing that work and making sure we bring it to light in terms of having really good discussions about making sure that students in these different districts have the kind of resources that they need and that fit the identified issues that may be occurring such as, one of the things we've most recently seen with COVID-19 is the lack of broadband and the lack of computers and understanding that's very prevalent in both urban and rural areas because one of the things we understand is that oftentimes there are low-income families that don't have their own computer.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

That's very different than maybe what's happening in suburban schools. So, we've had to find some different ways that we can begin to address these issues.

Eric Neal:

Yeah. That really makes a lot of sense and I think that a lot of people sometimes when they hear the term cultural competency, they're kind of imagining one thing. But, really it's about any sort of group. It's not necessarily one ethnic group, or one religious group, or anything like that.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

No. I think it's just being aware and I think the other thing to be aware is that many of us, there's a lot of similarities between us. But there are also some differences that we have to address as we begin to think about what interventions are effective. Understanding the families, understanding the environments that they live in, understanding their communities.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

So, I think it's very broad in terms of kind of understanding the many groups that you may be working with in your districts, or in any other organization that you may be a part of.

Eric Neal:

Definitely. With all of the polarization and social justice issues in society today, do you see cultural competency as a bridge to addressing these challenging topics?

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

I do. And yesterday I just had my last diversity class and this is a course that I love teaching and one of the things that I'm always reminded of when I teach the class is that my goal is really to get any type of student that's in the class. And I had students that were doctors, I had students that were marriage and family therapists, that were in-school psychologists.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And Ultimately it's about raising the awareness and looking at themselves and thinking about, "How can I make a difference?" But in part, one of the things they all say is that they have to understand the history of our country. They have to understand why the United States is the way it is. And they often talk about the history that they don't get in their schooling. And I think it does make a difference about giving them a broader view of what the world, especially the United States looks like.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And when they do that and when we have really courageous conversations, because many of them never really talked about race because it's sort of a taboo subject. But in here we try to create an environment where they can ask questions and share their many different perspectives. What they learn is that, we have 20 people in the class, but there's 20 different perspectives.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

When they get to the end, it's really amazing looking at how they've grown, how they've begun to look at themselves, how they've begun to look at the work that they're going to be doing and how they can make a difference. So, to me education is critically important in terms of understanding the real history of the United States, but oftentimes we're very fearful of the unknown. And so we want to have sort of a myth about how things really operate without really knowing the truth.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And so until we have these conversations and we're willing to take risks and to engage in conversations with other people, I want to be optimistic that the polarization and the focus on social justice will happen and I am encouraged by the last six months of how many people have really started to examine these issues in much more critical ways, rather than putting their head in the sand. Because, that's what a lot of times we do. And when you do that, you don't really get to learn and begin to open your eyes to things that are different out there.

Eric Neal:

Yeah. When you've been around a long time like I have, you've seen these big moments kind of spring up where we have a huge atrocity, terrible thing happen and people are just locked in and so motivated for a minute. And then it seems like it goes away and just goes back to normal, just how things were and then you repeat the cycle over and over again, but I'm kind of with you.

Eric Neal:

I feel like something felt different in the last six months where you had people from every walk of life and every group standing up together at the same time saying, "It's gone too far. We really can't go on this way any more." The fact that it really hasn't left the net, these conversations are still taking place. I think that really is encouraging.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

Yeah. Absolutely.

Eric Neal:

So, early on you described cultural competency as a three-legged stool. What do each of those legs stand for?

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

So, cultural competency really involves three areas, so that's the three-legged stool. The first one is awareness and just developing a personal awareness. The second one is developing knowledge of other cultures, and then finally development of skills.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And one of the things I see, especially you were talking about being around for a while, so have I, and so when we first started doing a lot of diversity training, we really focused on the second leg, knowledge. But when we did that, we didn't really examine our own personal awareness. And I often say, "To understand another culture, you have to understand your own culture."

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

So, one of the things I have my class do is they have to write a cultural heritage paper, because I want the students to really think about how they were socialized, how they were socialized to think about majority and minority people and how did they come to be.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And many of the students think, "I don't have a culture," but in writing the paper, they discover they do have a culture. May not be German or Irish, but it may be a small town culture. It may be the culture of religion that has really guided them. And to me, awareness is really critical. That's why we talk a lot about doing the implicit bias with the Kirwan Institute. You can go on and take many of those tests. And so students really start to think about, "Wow, how do I view these things?"

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And then the knowledge comes and the knowledge, we talk about the different groups, but also understanding their cultures on a continuum. That's why at the beginning, I think we made mistakes when we said, "Oh, we're going to come in and tell you about Latina culture. We're going to come in and tell you about Black Americans." But we only talked about a segment and we really didn't look at the continuum and really understand how social class really makes a [inaudible 00:10:10].

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And that really impacts medicine. The stuff we're talking about. Again, we go very broadly. We talk about religion. We talk about LGBTQ. And so we really tried to begin to think about what is that knowledge?

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And then the third part is skills. And my sense is if you have the awareness and knowledge, the skills will come, because you're going to practice differently. Once you have this awareness about not only your personal self, but the other groups and then you have this knowledge to me, you can't help, but practice in a culturally responsive way that you're going to look at things very differently. And I'm really encouraged because I always tell my students, I hope you have more questions than answers when you leave this class, because if you do, you want to keep exploring and trying to find those.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And as I'm reading the reflection papers, those are the things they talk about, what they learn, how they see things differently, what it will mean for them in their job. And so they're already starting to think about how do I take this awareness and knowledge and apply it to my future work. And for me, that's very encouraging.

Eric Neal:

Yeah. It we've talked a little bit before, when we were planning for the podcast and I got so many things floating around in my mind and just on the awareness piece, it made me think back to, I was a history major. And I was really interested in history when I was in elementary school. And have been fourth grade, your state history and going through middle school and all these things.

Eric Neal:

And I felt like I really had a good understanding of it until I went to college and you dig deeper into these things and you realize that some of the stuff that you just took is well, this is just what there was is very biased, or leaves a lot of stuff out, or all of these different things. And so I think people even who are intentionally trying to be aware of things still really can benefit from this deeper dive into figuring out who they are and what they believe as a gateway to go in and have those deeper discussions.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

Yeah. It gives us great examples of so many of my students I've talked about this with awareness, because college actually is a great place for people to become more aware. And so many of my students who come from small towns, for example, talk about going to college and all of a sudden, they came from towns that were very homogeneous and they go to college and all of a sudden, there's this whole world of people that are culturally different than them. They have roommates that are Indian or African-American. And they begin to have best friends that are from these different cultures. And all of a sudden their awareness becomes different.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And they often talk about how going to college in a diverse setting expands their worldview and how in many respects they do talk about how sometimes they're different than the people back in their town and realizing in part is because they don't get the experience of being with people that are culturally different in so many ways, whether it's socio-economic status, whether it's race, ethnicity, LGBTQ.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

So, I think the awareness is the most critical piece and I think is one of the most important piece in cultural competency. You have to have that before you get into knowledge, because if you do

knowledge, I'll give an example. You may make the mistake of being what we call the centrum of being the savior.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

You go into the urban schools and you want to be the savior. They don't need a savior. They need somebody, who's going to be an advocate, lift them up, provide rigorous lessons, but you also have to understand what is your own bias that you may be experiencing. And sometimes they don't even realize it, but sometimes it's the kind of things they say, well, they'll say, "Well, we have to leave them kind of alone. Their dad's in jail, their mother's a drug addict." Okay. What does that have to do with anything? [inaudible 00:14:06] school now and so just being aware of that, the bias, this may be a brilliant kid, despite everything that happened with their parents.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And so you as a teacher have the opportunity to lift them and give and show them opportunities that may be there in spite of their parents. So, I think just being aware of our own biases that we may have. That we're not even aware of and a lot of times my students will say, "Wow, I didn't realize I had this bias, but I discovered that I have this bias against blah, blah, blah, blah."

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

So, I think the awareness to me is the most critical piece. And I think courageous conversations allow you to broaden that awareness, but you have to be in safe spaces and that's one thing I really try to create for my class. So, people feel like they can ask anything and they can talk about these difficult subjects.

Eric Neal:

Yeah. I think that's part of when you move on to that knowledge aspect, it's not like I'm going to learn all these things and now I'm culturally competent and everything's fixed. And like you said, I can go off and save everyone. It's about being knowledgeable about the topic and the aspects of it and really being grounded in that idea of it's not a finish line. It's a journey that you constantly need to be thinking about and practicing and working in. Because, a lot of times people think, well, I'll give you a two hour professional development. I have the knowledge. I'm the expert and I may take it back from training everybody. That's not really it.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

That's not enough. I tell people if you're going to do bring the Kirwan Institute, or do implicit bias for an hour session, that's not enough and don't think, "Oh, I did this implicit bias training. I'm good." No, it's broader. And when we were talking before, as we were preparing, I was sharing just my experience working in New York city district 23, one [inaudible 00:16:02] districts.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And that's one of the things that I did is that I just learned the community. It was all Black and Latino. We had Western Indies from Jamaica and Trinidad, Tobago. And I used many of my colleagues as cultural mediators to try to understand as a school psychologist, what should I know about our kid coming from Jamaica? And there was a difference of whether they lived in the city, or whether they live

in the country and just ask questions because my whole thing was, I wanted to make sure I practice in a way that honored the students and really was fair to them.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

But, I also understood that I had to understand this population. That even though I looked like them, my experiences were different. I came from the Midwest I had not seen poverty quite like this. And so it was a tremendous training ground in terms of thinking about what I wanted to do in the future, especially in terms of training educators to be able to work with students that were culturally different than them.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

So, it's things that I did. I didn't even know they were called cultural mediators until I really got to the university started studying this, but that's what I used them for. And it was very instructive and very helpful to kind of really learn about the populations.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

So, I didn't go in and say, "Oh, let me learn all about Jamaicans." But, I learned the general things about what is it about this population that I need to know and part of it was understanding what was it about them coming from their country? What was their schooling system like? So, I think people sort of get caught up with, "Oh my God, I need to know everything about African-Americans." No. You don't have to know everything, but you have to know your community and the people in your community and be able to know what are some of the things that may be unique that you need to know as a teacher educator.

Eric Neal:

Right. It seems like it's not about knowing it to be able to just take them from one box and put them in another box [crosstalk 00:17:51] knowing it to be able to adjust the way that you do your work so that you're meeting the needs and making sure that everybody's included.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

Yes. Absolutely.

Eric Neal:

So, MTSS Multi-Tiered System of Support, it's becoming a big focus in education here in Ohio. When I think about the right side of the pyramid where PBIs lives, I've heard it called the climate culture side of the pyramid. I see things like social and emotional learning, restorative justice in other whole child initiatives, how does cultural competency fit in with all of this important work?

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

So, as I told you, I love MTSS and I hope that every district can do it and do it correctly.

Eric Neal:

I'm here with you.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

Yeah. So, that's really important. And I agree about the culture climate and the cultural competency piece, again means you have to know your school, you have to know the different groups in your school and you may want to do a cultural climate survey and it's looking at often times and like in high school, especially, we sort of have, I remember doing some work in a suburban school and they had a certain way that they want students to be. And I said, "What happens to the other students that don't fit into that?" And what was interesting is that they said, well that's probably the people that fit into what we call, whatever. Is only about 25% of the students.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

So, I said, "What happens to the other 75%?" And I said, so what they do is they start to form cliques that fit because they sometimes still outside." So, as we look at climate culture and as we look at developing a school that all students feel like they belong, I think it's really important to kind of get a handle on that and understand and not be afraid to say, We have a lot of African-Americans in our school and we have some that are middle-class and some that are low income, just like we have a lot of Whites school, some are middle-class and some are low income.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

Is there a difference in how they see the school? Is there a difference in how we treat them? And those are questions that sometimes teachers may have to ask, because they may find that, wow, the kid is lower income. I don't push them as that much.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And one of the phrases is that we need to figure out how to empower all of our students, not enable our students. So, to me as you're thinking about culture climate in that PBIs piece, you have to have this cultural competency, because it means you're going to ask questions differently than what you typically do. And it also may mean you have to ask hard questions and come up with different things.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

Because, I think one of the biggest problems I'll take suspension for example. We know that Black males are more likely to be suspended. And one of the things that I talked to a lot of principals about is we got to put different things in their toolbox, because the reason why we suspend is that we don't have a lot of things in our toolbox. So, PBIS should help us have more things in our toolbox so we can get rid of the dis proportionality as it relates to suspension and expulsions.

Eric Neal:

Yeah. It really does seem like you can't do all those things separately as these different initiatives. It's really about thinking, how do I create this culture? Not like a check. I checked the box, we have a great crane in our building, but a culture of people that want to have these types of conversations, because they care about families and students and are willing to do the hard work. So, yeah. That really-

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

As what it means, you may have to talk to the students. Yeah.

Eric Neal:



Yeah. And the parents is not, not talk to them like, Hey, I'm telling you this, like find out what they need. Like absolutely fine.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And do you feel like you belong in this school? It's a very telling question. And one of the things we I'm very proud of that the state board of education is the strategic plan we did which really is focused on the whole child. Really looks at equity and looks at social-emotional learning. I think those are critical things. And I really just pleased that the state school support teams are really focused on those things, because I think that really will make a difference in so many of the lives of our students.

Eric Neal:

I couldn't agree more. So, if someone's listening to this and they'd like to jump in and get their feet wet, they can't do a full course, a semester course at Ohio state, but they really want to start to learn more and develop themselves a little bit. What are a couple of things you could recommend for them to get started?

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

Yeah. And two of them are on YouTube and they're actually videos, but I sort of see this as a part of the awareness piece. I think they're really powerful in terms of thinking, especially if you're in diverse schools, I think it's really powerful. And the first one is a single story and you can just put it in there. It is Chimamanda Adichie who is from Nigeria and does this wonderful YouTube that talks about the single story.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And to me, that is really powerful, because a lot of times we become guilty of only seeing our students in one way. And then the other one is John Powell. I just love to hear him talk. He has a wonderful soothing voice and on YouTube there. Is called the keynote: The Mechanisms of Othering. And what's interesting about this one is that as a 2015 YouTube presentation, but he could have done it in 2020.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

It is so striking to me that he literally could give the same speech in 2020. And it would-

Eric Neal:

[inaudible 00:23:25].

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

I think if you're kind of thinking about this awareness stage, I think that one. And then one of the most timely and has been around forever and I think every cultural diversity class uses it as Peggy McIntosh's Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack. And I think that's another very powerful piece.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

So, if you're kind of thinking just about awareness and looking at things a little bit differently, I think these are three great pieces to start with and gives you some food for thought as you begin to look at the kids that may be in your classroom and even if you don't have a diverse school, I think it also helps you think about the United States in terms of looking at the diversity and what may be occurring.

Eric Neal:

Yeah. The single story video, I really liked it because I felt like it was accessible enough to where people could, they felt comfortable enough. They could identify, there was something for everyone there, but it also didn't let you off the hook. It really forces you into reckoning with a couple of things where you're thinking, "Well, that's not me." And then you think, "Ah, it might be a little bit me."

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

Yeah. Well, and I thought that was what's powerful about it because she even says how she became, she felt [inaudible 00:24:37] the single story. And so sometimes even as we are culturally diverse, again, we're all on that journey. And I tell my students, we're all on this journey. I'm still on the journey. And so I think that's the other reason why it's very powerful.

Eric Neal:

Definitely. So, I know you're hard at work preparing for some culturally responsive practices, professional development that will take place this summer. Can you preview that for us?

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

Well, one of the things we're hoping in the department of teaching and learning is putting together a series of classes and we're kind of really focused on kind of the anti-racism agenda. And hopefully when I'm back with you, we will have kind of our outline.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

And we're hoping to not only have some classes, but have some CEUs that teachers can use for professional development with this theme of looking at culturally responsive practice. So, I hope that we're working very diligently to be able to roll some of these out. Many of them will be online. So, that may be very attractive to people since we're all used to being online now, but we'll make it accessible to people. So, hopefully as we put that together, I will be able to share that with you.

Eric Neal:

Definitely. That would be great. Culturally responsive practices, it sounds like the way that we take all that work with the three-legged stool and actually put it to use. And I really look forward to having you back to talk about that in the future.

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

Yeah. That's the next step in many ways that's the skills part of it. And so [inaudible 00:26:01] the first two, then you kind of merge into culturally responsive practices.

Eric Neal:

Definitely. If people would like to know more about you and the work that you do, where should they go?

Dr. Antoinette Miranda:

I was going to say I have a website, but I couldn't tell you what it is. Isn't that right? But you can email me at [miranda.2@osu.edu](mailto:miranda.2@osu.edu) if you have questions, or if you want more information, suggestion from

This transcript was exported on Jan 28, 2021 - view latest version [here](#).

books, I encourage you to reach out to me and we'll be happy to respond to you and make [inaudible 00:26:33] but I will get back with you in terms of trying to provide some information to you.

Eric Neal:

Great. Once again, I'd like to thank Dr. Miranda for us today. If you'd like to know more about upcoming cultural competency events, cultural responsive practices events, and the work that we do here at State Support Team 11, go to our website. That's [sst11.org](http://sst11.org) give us a call at 614.753.4694. Or hit us up on Twitter. We're @SSTRegion11. And if you'd like to get ahold of me, I'm at [eric.neal@escoco.org](mailto:eric.neal@escoco.org) until next time, I'm Eric Neal. Thanks for listening.