

# IMPLEMENTING CULTURAL HUMILITY TRAINING AT THE SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

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## BACKGROUND

The Seattle Public Library provides K-12 students with after-school Homework Help sessions in science, math, social studies, and English. The Homework Help program began in 1997, and originally ran in neighbourhoods with schools that provided free or reduced-cost lunches for students, and has since expanded to 11 branches. Homework Help is run by volunteers, who receive training in pedagogy, but do not typically embed social justice concepts into their teaching. In providing training on cultural competency, we hope volunteers will examine the wider impact they have on their students, and how students use libraries. In requiring volunteers to examine their own biases and privilege as part of their training, they will be more likely to create a learning environment that is equitable and inclusive for students of all cultures and learning styles.



## NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Our initial assessment of the Homework Help program included gathering the current training materials for volunteers, and reviewing an assessment of the program carried out in 2012. We also surveyed volunteers to determine their learning needs around cultural competency. We drew on Sunny's experience as a former Homework Help volunteer, observed a Homework Help session, and attended All-City Tutor training run by Seattle Public Schools. Lastly, we examined the demographics of students likely to attend the program.

## CURRICULUM DESIGN

We designed our curriculum using the social-justice pedagogies of Paolo Freire and Augusto Boal. The result was a curriculum that could be scaled to accommodate different sized workshops, and encouraged participants to consider equity, social justice, and cultural humility. Participants were sent readings to do prior to the workshop, as well as access to take the Implicit Bias Test.

## PILOTING THE WORKSHOP

We piloted our workshop to thirty Homework Help volunteers in late April, at the Douglass-Truth branch. The workshop spanned two hours, and included the following activities:

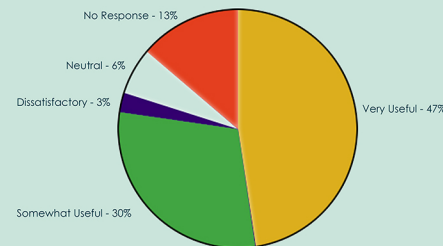
- Creating community agreements
- Introduction of terminology
- Mapping identity & privilege
- Clarifying common misconceptions around culture and social justice
- Reflection & free-write
- Inter-group dialogue
- Brainstorming strategies for taking action in the classroom

The workshop combined a variety of active learning techniques that provided participants with opportunities to examine systems of oppression and how they can resist or enable them in a classroom setting. Participants also shared their own knowledge and experience, creating an empowering learning environment.

## IMPACT

Both the initial participant responses and our workshop evaluations indicated that our pilot workshop was relevant to our volunteers, and illustrated the need for cultural humility training. A significant number of participants came from outside of SPL, including Treehouse and KCLS Study Zone. Participants indicated a very high level of learning, and left eager to share resources with their institutions.

How useful was this workshop in facilitating understanding of different cultural perspectives?



## NEXT STEPS

Our curriculum and teaching materials have been made available to The Seattle Public Library.

A revised version of this workshop will be part of orientation for all new SPL volunteers, starting Fall 2017.

Our recommendations include:

- A series of student focus groups to center the student perspective
- To create a better sense of where our participants volunteer
- Expand the workshop to three hours