



Professional Reading Group Discussion Questions

These are questions for a professional reading group's discussion of *Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brain* (Corwin, 2015), by Zaretta Hammond.

Overall

1. Choose two passages from the book that you find especially significant or meaningful and be prepared to explain your selections and how they relate to each other.
2. How do you react to the book's overall argument – first, how would you summarize that argument and, second, do you find it convincing?
3. Identify one important place in the text where you disagree. Summarize what the text is arguing and how you would respond. Why is your disagreement with Hammond here important?
4. How would you rate the book, overall? What is your criteria, and on each criterion, how does the work stack up?

Part I: Building Awareness and Knowledge

5. How does Hammond define “culturally responsive teaching,” and what does she say (at various places in the text) that culturally responsive teaching is *not*?

6. What are some of the ways that Hammond identifies student cultural individuation or separation from a “mainstream” normative culture? In what ways are your students in your classes culturally distinguishable from this mainstream norm?
7. What did you learn from the book’s discussions of neuroscience and learning that you think can be helpful to your teaching? How can it be helpful – in what specific ways?
8. Can you identify an instance in your own teaching where you feel your cultural frame of reference interfered with the effectiveness of your instruction? Conversely, can you identify an instance in which you exhibited cultural responsiveness to your students that enhanced your instructional effectiveness? How do you know, in each instance, that you were less or more effective? What is your evidence?

Part II: Building Learning Partnerships

9. What are the strengths and limitations of Hammond’s conception of the “learning partnerships” that should be established between teacher and student in the classroom?
10. To what extent are you an “ally” to and a “warm demander” of your students in the classroom, the way that Hammond is defining these terms? How can you become more of an ally to and warm demander of your students? Are the benefits worth the costs of doing so?
11. Do your students in general have a strong growth mindset? What factors are influencing your students’ growth mindset, and how are you trying to intervene on those factors?

Part III: Building Intellectual Capacity

12. What are Hammond’s key recommendations to teachers in their efforts to build the intellectual capacity of dependent learners? In what ways does she connect these recommendations back to cultural responsiveness? Do you find these recommendations and connections convincing or not? Why or why not?