Training Guidelines for Teachers of South Asian American Students
PDF Available
Developed for **ISAASE** by Dr. Punita C. Rice, published January 1, 2019
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1. **Face-to-Face** – *Face-to-face training is best.*
   Rationale: Cultural competence and proficiency training tends to be most effective when conducted live (Guerra & Nelson, 2007). Although technology can be beneficial for teaching and learning cultural literacy and proficiency, "face-to-face interaction is best," since using technology might reinforce the very "distancing and isolation that contribute to cultural misunderstandings" (Guerra & Nelson, 2007, pp. 59-60).

2. **Group-Based** – *Training should be structured for groups.*
   Rationale: McAllister and Irvine (2000) recommend having teachers engage in group-work for such trainings, since this approach tends to better promote cross-cultural growth and cultural responsiveness. Training should also allow teachers to explore their understanding of culture in a group setting to "encourage risk-taking to foster cross-cultural growth," but avoid so much risk-taking that there are feelings of fear, guilt, or frustration (McAllister & Irvine, 2000, p. 20). To this point, it is advised that trainers collaborate with participants to establish expectations and ground rules for conduct (see next guideline).

3. **Establish Ground Rules** – *Collaboratively establish ground rules for sessions.*
   Rationale: Issues around cultural proficiency can generate emotional reactions among participants; because different participants are bringing different levels of knowledge (and therefore different questions and concerns) to the table, without ground rules, conversations can become uncomfortable or feel inappropriate. Therefore, facilitators should collaborate with participants to develop mutually agreed upon ground rules. Examples of possible rules: participants commit to assuming the best of their peers' motives in the questions they ask, the comments they make, and "risks" they take; one person speaks at a time; etc. Whatever rules are established, display them such that they are visible throughout training to make expectations clear.

4. **Differentiated** – *Training should be differentiated and culturally responsive.*
   Rationale: Teachers have varying levels of cultural knowledge and need differing levels of support to improve culturally proficiency (McAllister & Irvine, 2000). Thus, training in cultural proficiency should be differentiated to teachers' levels of awareness (which is likely best achieved through in-person training; see first recommendation). This should be done without singling participants out; consider applying teaching strategies from the classroom to address diverse needs. Further, to be effective, training must itself be delivered in a culturally responsive way, since learners from different cultures may have different learning needs and preferences (Gay, 2010; Hammond, 2014).

5. **Self-Awareness and Self-Reflection** – *Emphasizing the importance of self-knowledge and self-awareness is recommended in training.*

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Rationale: Self-knowledge, or understanding and acknowledging one's own identity, and how it may influence interactions with students (McAllister & Irvine, 2010; Nadal et al., 2015), and Self-reflection, or engaging in ongoing introspection that allows us to assess and reassess our own thinking and how we support our students (Asher, 2007; Brookfield, 2017), are critical. As teachers become more aware of their own cultures, race, and potential biases early in the intervention process, training becomes more relevant and more effective (McAllister & Irvine 2000). Similarly, self-reflection, helps us contextualize our identities and reflect on our biases and areas in need of improvement.