



The Importance of Building Cultural Competence

Cultural Competence is the ability to understand, communicate and interact effectively with people across cultures. It is being aware of one's own world view, and developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences.

Our February *Monthly Mentor Training* gathered mentors together for the opportunity to learn about and increase our cultural competence. Sometimes uncomfortable but always timely, this topic is essential for everyone. Developing and strengthening our cultural competence as **Seedling Mentors** is especially important due to the reality that many of the students we serve are of minority ethnicities and experience some form of racial discrimination on a daily basis.

For example, microaggressions are the constant and continuing reality of slights, insults, invalidations and indignities put upon marginalized groups by people in our everyday lives. These run along a continuum of violent and in your face, to so subtle that the recipient feels its impact, but may not be able to identify it. Microaggressions are separated into three types.

- **Microinsults:** Conscious and intentional actions or slurs, such as using racial epithets, or displaying swastikas.
- **Microassaults:** verbal and nonverbal communications that subtly convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity.
- **Microinvalidations:** Communications that subtly exclude, negate or nullify the thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a person of color or minority. These are not always meant to intentionally hurt someone. However, what you think you said may not be what was heard.

For a detailed description and the impact of microaggressions, watch this 18 minute [video](#) featuring students describing their experiences.

Engaging, listening with an open heart, sharing our stories and examining our own biases begins the process of understanding. And it is a process; something much too great and powerful to remedy in a lunch time training. Seedling will continue to provide factual information, thought provoking articles and encouragement to continue brave conversations to build cultural competence.

Sources- The Chronicle of Evidence Based Mentoring