

Cultural Sharing Conversations

University of Denver

Denver, CO



COLORADO
Department of Education

A Cultural Sharing Conversation (CSC) is a required assignment completed by all first year graduate students in the Child, Family, and School Psychology Program at the University of Denver. Students preparing for licensure as a special educator or school psychologist complete a CSC assignment as part of a seminar associated with an initial school-based practicum.

A CSC is a reciprocal, strengths-based story sharing exchange developed with input from Community Navigators at the Colorado African Organization who themselves are former refugees. A CSC is designed as an alternative to structured initial interviews to foster authentic relationships and is viewed as a social bridging experience between aspiring educators and a newcomer immigrant or refugee family.

Pairs of students engage in a CSC with a volunteer newcomer family at a time and place most convenient to the family. Families invite personal interpreters if translation is needed. A nondirective, unscripted framework is followed that prompts a bi-directional conversation where all participants share personal stories across four domains:

- Life Journeys: Past experiences that have brought them to this place and time.
- Family Traditions: Treasured family experiences, activities and learning that occurs at home.
- Schooling Experiences: Prior and current school culture, practices, expectations and policies.
- Future Ideas: How to best welcome, build relationships, communicate, and educate each other.

After completing the CSC, students prepare a visual representation and give an oral presentation of the personal takeaways gained from this experience. Students also submit a written self-reflection summarizing: a) what was shared during the CSC; b) what was learned about this culture, this family, and oneself; c) how this experience relates to ideas presented in several assigned readings; and d) how this experience will impact their future practice and efforts to collaboratively partner with culturally and linguistically diverse students and families.

Overall, it is clear from a review of these reflections over the last several years that this assignment enhances preservice educators' self-assurance about relating, engaging, and collaborating with diverse newcomer communities.

Standard 2--Communicating Effectively