7. TRANSFORMATIVE CONSCIOUSNESS
RAISING QUESTIONS

Are we “woke” or awake or aware to what is happening around us? What is it that transforms us? What is it that makes us change? Change comes when we learn or challenge ourselves to think outside the boxes we place around ourselves and others. We must wonder about where to start when it comes to making changes. It usually starts with something that catches us, makes us think. As a social worker and a social scientist, I come from the mindset that knowledge can come from the seemingly simplest places, not necessarily from unsolvable mathematical equations. We could sit with the meaning of a word and how it is applied. Why does this matter in the context of middle education and the nature of this book and our narrative expressions of our middle level experiences and how to create consciousness and change moving forward?

The following are a list of questions to which educators and activists can refer to evaluate self, raise consciousness for self and others, and these may impact one’s action in moving forward. Change can happen. It usually starts within; our children and students feel our care, enthusiasm, and sincerity of our character and values in our teaching. We are not as sanitized as we think, despite being and feeling constricted by standards and school culture. We can make small changes and spark change, especially in this day and age where difference (especially for those holding many intersecting identities) is considered deviant. We can no longer conform. Feel free to explore and sit with what comes during reflection. We can sit with (dis) comfort. Again, the social worker in me is sharing that taking moments to accept and commit to non-judgment is important when sitting with something, perhaps, just one question. I imagined over 100 questions that I myself pondered. Pick a question and ponder over it, in whatever way you usually can in your reflective spaces.

The section offers starter questions for raising consciousness for self as well as for our youth and students, to create inclusive environments, to facilitate healthy identity development directed by students, from a teacher-learner stance. These questions question what we are doing in the classroom and why we do them. These come from my own process of writing a chapter for this book, in Part 5, titled, Raising Consciousness for Multi-Racial Third Culture Kids. Please refer to that chapter for more context on the generation of these questions. These questions were just something I started to think about that lead to more questions. I thought they might be helpful for educators and administrators to think about, though, they can really
be applicable to anyone and everyone. It is okay to have questions, and to discover what comes up when we are trying to understand something and that this is a part of the consciousness raising process where we are critically examining something and potentially taking it to learn more and act on it, or create change for self and others, to create a better society.

Q: What are my positionalities? (I can ask myself this over and over again because sometimes this positionality changes and reflecting on this leads to humility of place, power, and privilege.)

Q: In what ways do my positionalities influence my pedagogy, teaching philosophy, teaching practice, curriculum, activities, and students in the classroom?

Q: In what ways do those privileges manifest in my job and relationship with others, not just in the educational spheres?

Q: In other ways, am I practicing what I am preaching to my students?

Q: Why do we do the things we do?

Q: Do the images I present in my class activities and curriculum reflect and represent the diverse experiences of my students? Why or why not?

Q: Have I used the heteronormative binary (n)either/(n)or framework in my communication with students and families and in my teaching pedagogy?

Q: In what ways do I encourage students to use the both/and framework in their lives?

Q: Do we teach the mind/body/spirit connection?

Q: Why do we stay away from teaching spirituality in the classroom?

Q: How effective are the reflective classroom activities I use? What does reflection look like for different students? Can we encourage ourselves and students to express reflection in various activities?

Q: In what ways can I utilize a critical spirituality framework to reflect on my teaching practices and act as a result?

Q: Who is benefiting from this lesson/framework? In what ways am I benefiting?

Q: In what ways are my students and their families benefiting/suffering as a result of this lesson/framework/teaching method?

Q: In what ways can I adopt the teacher-learner stance in today’s classroom?

Q: In what ways can I give power to my students that they do not feel outside the classroom? Can we facilitate activities in the classroom where students can connect to their communities?

Q: How can I learn more about the diverse experiences of my multi-racial TCK students? Or, students with diverse experiences?

Q: What is a humanizing pedagogy?

Q: How can I incorporate humanizing pedagogy in the classroom?

Q: In this humanizing pedagogy, can we teach our students compassion for self and others?

Q: Can we deal with the suffering, discrimination and reproduction of the subjugation/subversion of humanity as a result of these constructs?