



NEWSLETTER

Cultural Competence in Education: A Look at Minnesota

ACCORDING TO THE MINNESOTA MINORITY EDUCATION PARTNERSHIP 2012 *STATE OF STUDENTS OF COLOR AND AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS REPORT*, MINNESOTA CONTINUES TO EXPERIENCE A TREMENDOUS RISE IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS OF COLOR. CURRENTLY 25% OF MINNESOTA'S K-12 STUDENTS ARE STUDENTS OF COLOR AND AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS, REPRESENTING A 43% GROWTH IN THAT DEMOGRAPHIC OVER THE PAST DECADE THAT HAS OFFSET MUCH OF THE DECLINE IN THE WHITE STUDENT ENROLLMENT. OVER 29% OF MINNESOTA'S STUDENTS OF COLOR/AMERICAN INDIANS ARE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS. LESS THAN 50% OF AMERICAN INDIAN, HISPANIC/LATINO, AND BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN STUDENTS GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL IN FOUR YEARS. THE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION RATES ARE EVEN LOWER FOR VARIOUS SUBGROUPS OF STUDENTS OF COLOR AND AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS, INCLUDING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES, STUDENTS LIVING IN POVERTY, AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS.

As our region and nation become increasingly diverse, it is critical that all teachers and communities are prepared to instill and achieve educational success for all their students. Research shows that the number one influence on a student is the teacher and that students of color perform better on standardized tests when they are taught by teachers who are members of a like community. Students also perform better when taught by teachers who have been trained in cultural competence. In a recent study from the National Center for Cultural Competence at Georgetown (Bronheim, 2011), only 5.6% of the nation's teachers felt they were well prepared to work with students from cultural communities different than their own. To help address this gap, The National Education Association advocates for national and state policies that better equip educators to be **culturally competent practitioners** who can better serve diverse students (National Education Association, n.d.).

According to Diller and Moule (2005), **culture competence** is the

ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than our own. It entails developing certain personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities, developing certain bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching.

There are four basic cultural competence skill areas, and growth in each area tends to strengthen growth in the other areas. The four areas include:

- Valuing diversity
- Being culturally self-aware
- Understanding the dynamics of cultural interactions
- Institutionalizing cultural knowledge and diversity (King, et al., 2007).

Research shows that cultural competence leads to more effective teaching and learning. In this newsletter, The Foundation for the Advancement of Culture and Education (FACE) tackles the issue of cultural competence in education. FACE is a nonprofit,



community-led initiative devoted to providing practice guidelines and tools; professional development; and research to promote best practices in cultural competencies, parent and family engagement, and educational interventions in reading and math. FACE provides training for preservice teachers, in-service teachers, and administrators in cultural competence in both K-12 and higher education. Work with the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson leverages FACE's expertise in parent and family engagement, multiple community partner collaborations, and tested research-based best practices with reading and math interventions. Long-term projects like ELITE (Educating Leaders in Teacher Education) Academy help to recruit and train young people interested in teaching the next generation of educational leaders.

—Jean Strait
Guest Editor

Note: References to this article can be found on page 6.

2013 NDPN Crystal Star Winners

Six National Dropout Prevention Network (NDPN) Crystal Star Awards of Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention, and Prevention winners were announced at the 25th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference held in Atlanta, GA, November 3 - 6, 2013.

These awards identify and bring national recognition to outstanding individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of the mission of the NDPN to increase graduation rates through research and evidence-based solutions. We are pleased to recognize the work of this year's winners who were selected from numerous outstanding nominees.

Four individuals and two programs were selected to receive 2013 Crystal Star Awards of Excellence.



National
Dropout Prevention
Center/Network

NEWSLETTER

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Individual Award Winners



Dr. Karen Cooper-Haber, Coordinator of Family Intervention Services, Richland School District Two, Columbia, SC, was honored with an award of excellence for individual achievement.



Dr. Malvine Richard, Supervisor of Nontraditional Programs and School Discipline, Christina School District, Wilmington, DE, was also honored with an award of excellence for individual achievement.



Dr. William Bennett, award-winning professor, radio show host, author, former Secretary of Education under Ronald Regan, and the Nation's first Drug Czar under George H. W. Bush, was presented an Individual Crystal Star Award of Excellence for Lifetime Achievement for National Impact.



Mr. John Peters, with 22 years of service to the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, was presented an Individual Crystal Star Award of Excellence for Distinguished Leadership and Service to the National Dropout Prevention Network.

Program Award Winners



Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program, New York, NY, is designed to help educators teach students skills related to the core social-emotional competencies of self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Overcoming Obstacles has been in operation for 21 years. Through the support of its sponsors, the program is offered at no cost to school districts.



New Directions Alternative Education Center, Manassas, VA, opened in 2004 and serves students in a nontraditional setting. Through small classes, flexible schedules, challenging curriculum, and extracurricular activities in a supportive environment, New Directions has enabled over 1,000 at-risk students to graduate from high school. The Center has realized over 90% on-time graduation rates for the last three years consecutively.

Nominations for 2014 Crystal Star Awards

NDPN will begin to accept nominations for the 2014 Crystal Star Awards of Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention, and Prevention in February. Forms will be available at www.dropoutprevention.org. The deadline for nominations will be July 1, 2014. The award categories for 2014 are Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention, and Prevention for Individuals and Programs; Excellence in Dropout Recovery, Intervention, and Prevention for Individuals and Programs Working with Students with Disabilities; and Distinguished Leadership and Service to the National Dropout Prevention Network.

All award winners will be honored at the 26th Annual National Dropout Prevention Network Conference in Louisville, KY, November 2-5, 2014.

Network Notes

Meet Our Guest Editor

■ Dr. Jean Strait, Professor and Director of the Center for Excellence in Urban Teaching at Hamline University, Saint Paul, MN, brings a wealth of firsthand experience in the classroom—having taught reading, literacy, and educational psychology in higher education for the past 25 years. She has also developed and led urban teacher programs with service-learning components at two-year and four-year colleges throughout the Twin Cities. Dr. Strait serves as a consultant and community expert for LGBTQ parents and families. She has created programs to train adults in the Dakota Language and has helped refugee teachers become licensed in Minnesota.



Best Wishes to Marty Duckenfield

■ NDPC/N says goodbye and best wishes to Ms. Marty Duckenfield, our Public Information Director who has been with the Center for more than 25 years. Marty has supervised the writing and production of nearly all NDPC/N publications; authored and edited countless booklets, newsletters, brochures, and Center/Network PR; and has become one of the nation's most esteemed writers and producers of practitioner materials on service-learning as a dropout prevention strategy. Marty will continue to co-host NDPC/N's monthly *Solutions to the Dropout Crisis* webcast, but will be working with Clemson Broadcast Productions on projects beyond the realm of dropout prevention and graduation. NDPC/N wishes Marty all the best and we encourage our newsletter readers and other friends to be on the lookout for Marty as she embarks on new ventures. Marty will indeed be missed at NDPC/N!



Rural Dropout Prevention Focus

■ In late October, The National Dropout Prevention Network announced that it would participate in a U.S. Department of Education funded initiative to analyze and enhance rural dropout prevention efforts in 15 states. The initiative was created to focus on states with a high percentage of schools in rural and remote areas, including Alaska, Arkansas, Iowa, Maine, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wyoming. The U.S. Department of Education awarded the contract for the project to Manhattan Strategy Group (MSG), which put together a team including the National Dropout Prevention Network and other partners to assess needs, develop dropout prevention tools and products, and provide assistance to the 15 states. One example of a product planned as a result of this project is to produce documentary videos of various dropout prevention issues and work being done in states, to be used by the U.S. Department of Education and rural educators across the nation. The documentary films will be produced by Clemson Broadcast Productions.

"MSG has a history of successful partnerships to deliver best-in-class solutions to the U.S. Department of Education," said Shezad Habib, managing partner of MSG. "The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network and Clemson Broadcast Productions bring unique and proven capabilities that further our mutual goals in dropout prevention."

"A number of university-based and other dropout prevention organizations aggressively sought award of this contract," said Sandy Addis, Associate Director of the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network. "The selection of MSG and two Clemson-based organizations for this work is a tribute to Clemson's commitment to national public service."

Read a recent press release at www.dropoutprevention.org/news/20131025/rural-dropout-prevention-focus-clemson-us-department-education-partnership



26th Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM

■ The 26th Annual At-Risk Youth National FORUM, *Providing Hope and Support in and Beyond the Classroom*, will be held February 16-19 in Myrtle Beach, SC. Presentation topics include dropout prevention; STEM; juvenile justice and law enforcement; educational alternatives; school engagement; interacting with specific populations; leadership, policy, and governance; and future teachers in action. Keynote speakers for the event are Dr. Mark Wilson, 2009 National Principal of the Year; and two motivational speakers/authors who will inform and inspire: Ms. Donna Tyson and Dr. Willie Kimmons. We look forward to seeing you at the FORUM. Link to www.dropoutprevention.org/conferences/26th-annual-risk-youth-national-forum for more information.



2014 National Forum on Dropout Prevention Strategies for Native and Tribal Communities

■ The 2014 National Forum on Dropout Prevention Strategies for Native and Tribal Communities, *Building Engaging Educational Communities for Native Students*, will be held April 27-30 in Prior Lake, MN. Keynoters include Mr. Bill Mendoza, Dr. Anton Trever, Dr. Marcia Gentry, and Rev. Dr. Michael Oleksa. Link to www.dropoutprevention.org/conferences/2014-national-forum-dropout-prevention-strategies-native-and-tribal-communities for more information and to see conference strands.

Program Profile

Minnesota Transitions Charter School

by Mary Funk and Joyce Jones

In the heart of South Minneapolis there is a charter school with a bold history. In the early years Minnesota Transitions Charter School (MTS) was the place to go for summer school. Now students from the Twin Cities metro area look to MTS as a school that cares about meeting the needs of students in alternative and creative ways. Among the variety of programs from which students can choose are online courses, traditional classroom settings, independent study options, and career-training coursework. The program that has come to assist more students in this community achieve their goal to graduate is the Independent Study program at MTS.

In 2010 the National Center for Education Statistics reported that Minnesota had a four-year graduation rate of 88.2%. Not all of the 11.8% who did not graduate in four years dropped out. What happened to the students who didn't drop out and didn't graduate? Some of them found their way to MTS Independent Study where a small but dedicated staff works tirelessly to make sure that students can create a plan to earn the missing credits they need while putting in seat time with highly qualified licensed teachers. Current statistics in this program are 58% of MTS Independent Study students are between 18 – 21 years of age. Racial and ethnic backgrounds of students are 53% Black or African American, 18% White, 17% Hispanic, 6% Native American, 4% Asian, and 2% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.

Mary Funk, director of MTS Independent Study who is also the Deputy Superintendent of the district, champions this program to help students get the education that works best for them. She restructured this program 11 years ago to help hundreds of students every year accomplish their goals of working full-time and managing family and work responsibilities. Considering the many factors that get

in the way of students' ability to earn a diploma is the push that keeps this program so vital.

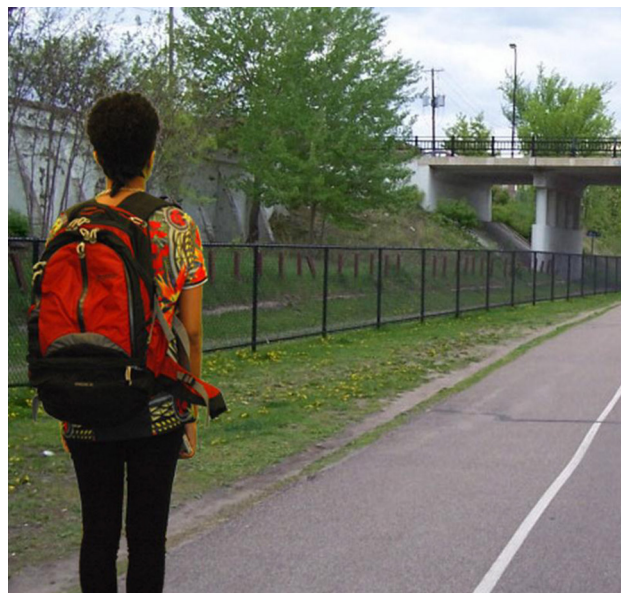
In the Independent Study program at MTS, students have a second option to recover credits and get back on track to graduation. Two years ago, MTS added a virtual space called VOIS (Virtual Online Independent Study) to their Independent Study program. VOIS allows students the opportunity to log on and recover their credit in an interactive online space with highly qualified licensed teachers in core subjects like math, social studies, science, and English. Students who are eligible for this program are residents of MN, who attend a full-time high school program; are 16 - 20 years of age; and have the reference of a guidance counselor. Students also have 24-hour access to email, call, or visit in a secure chat room with their teachers, to ask them questions when they are working on their course work. Students can work at their own pace to recover their credits. Often they are motivated to complete two or three semester courses in the school year.

Over the years the MTS district has grown to encompass programs from kindergarten to 12th grade and beyond. The MTS district is proud to have a variety of alternative programs to meet the needs of urban students. These include three elementary programs (K-5), four middle school programs (6-8), and three high school level programs (9-12). MTS

has three online programs including the VOIS program. The district is also proud to be the home of a sober high school that gives students an education option in an atmosphere that supports their recovery from substance use. A high school diploma is the first step to getting the postsecondary education that is necessary for people to earn living wages in this country. Students who do not graduate often have obstacles that only hinder their ability to provide and thrive. The mission of MTS is to be a free charter school that forges partnerships among students, businesses, communities and families to help each learner make the transition from school to work and college and meet the responsibilities of a changing world.

—Mary Funk
Assistant Superintendent
Virtual Online Instructional System
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Joyce Jones
Science Teacher
Virtual Online Instructional System
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Program Profile

McVay Youth Partnership

by Jane Krentz

On any Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoon from 3:30 to 6:00 p.m., some amazing things are happening at five locations in and around St. Paul, MN. Forty-seven Hamline University students serve as mentors and role models working with urban middle and high school youth in partnership with area churches.

McVay Youth-VOICE is part of Hamline University's Wesley Center for Spirituality, Service and Social Justice, and is funded by a generous endowment from the McVay Family Foundation. Local churches serve as host sites and partners to provide snacks for the youth.

Now in our 10th year of serving youth in the community, the McVay program connected with over 240 different youth in just the first two months of this school year, averaging over 130 youth per day across the sites.

The focus of the McVay Youth Partnership (Youth VOICE) program is multipronged. We provide a safe, fun place where middle and high school youth can spend time with friends participating in academic enrichment activities (journaling, word of the day, math review, mental math, etc.), and receive homework help. We also provide "theme-based" programming such as having international students

share information about their home countries and customs, exploring careers, and investigating different styles of music. We incorporate art projects, cooking activities, and computer research activities. Our programming also includes recreation, team-building games, and community service projects.

In addition to academic help, another major focus of our program is mentoring and relationship building. We hire an intentionally diverse cohort of Hamline students who serve as mentors and role models working with the equally diverse cohort of youth at all five of our programming sites. These mentors provide guidance, and by their actions and attention they reassure the students that they really care about them as individuals. Fellows and Interns encourage our students to prepare for postsecondary education and share information about how to prepare for college while still in middle school. We incorporate activities such as Sister Circle and Brother Circle to provide a safe place for the youth to discuss issues that concern them.

We know these relationships are important to both the college students and the youth, because the college students remain in contact with many of the youth long after they graduate, and many youth remain in touch

after they leave the program (due to graduation or moving away from the programming site).

We currently have four McVay staff who participated in the program when they were in middle and high school, and who are now Hamline students working as Fellows or Interns for McVay. We hope to have many more over the years!

We bring the youth from all the sites to campus at least twice per year, to enjoy the gym, the pool, the cafeteria, and tour the campus. We have a contest to design "McVay t-shirts" each year. It's an amazing sight to see our campus filled with middle and high school youth and their mentors, all wearing matching McVay t-shirts and big smiles!

Each year we also have a McVay Recognition Dinner to honor the McVay Fellows and Interns, as well as to thank our church partners and our donors. We also have a student speaker, selected from one of the sites. McVay alumni join us for the dinner and those who aren't able to attend send updates from around the world, continuing to follow John Wesley's words to "Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can as long as ever you can."

—Jane Krentz, Director
McVay Youth Programming

Mark your calendar for the next National Dropout Prevention Center/Network Webcast on



Solutions
to the Dropout Crisis

February 13, 2014, 3:30 – 4:30 p.m. Eastern Standard Time

The Life-Changing Impact of Life Skills Instruction

presented by Erin Capone

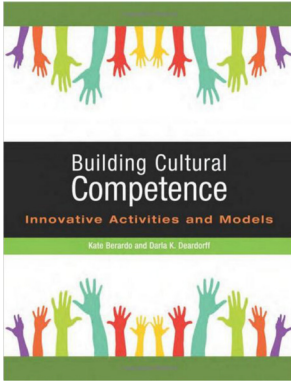
Life skills instruction is critical to dropout prevention and to ensuring our young people's success. Without knowing how to communicate effectively, set and achieve goals, and make sound decisions, children cannot realize their potential, achieve academically, or find meaningful careers. In this webcast, we will cover the importance of life skills instruction and the benefits it offers students and schools; best practices for implementing life skills instruction; and resources for bringing life skills instruction to young people.

Participation in this webcast is **free and no registration is required**. The program will be archived in its entirety on the Web site. **On the day of the webcast, sign on early to ensure your connection. Link to the broadcast at www.dropoutprevention.org/webcast.**

Book Review

Building Cultural Competence: Innovative Activities and Models. (2012). Kate Berardo and Darla K. Deardorff (Eds.). Stylus Publishing, LLC. [ISBN: 978-1-57922-804-0]

The book, *Building Cultural Competence*, presents engaging work in step-by-step instructions for how to effectively work with the new models, frameworks, and exercises for building learners' cultural competence. Edited by veteran trainers Kate Berardo and Darla Deardorff, the book contains several exercises, case studies, guided discussions, and tools that easily adapt to any audience. In addition to exercises, the book includes cultural frameworks and models like the updated DIE (Description, Interpretation, Evaluation) framework and the U-Curve model of adjustment. Berardo and Deardorff provide avenues of discussion to help build cultural competence in each activity through a lesson outline and suggestions for uses.



Education administrators will be able to use these activities in their pre-departure orientations for students going abroad. Corporate human resource professionals will find these activities invaluable in cultural competence building programs.

Professional development teams will find these ready-to-use tools meet clients at their developmental levels and will easily be able to document growth in diversity mind-sets. *Building Cultural Competence* is divided into four sections.

1. Directions on how to use the text
2. How to facilitate intercultural communication
3. How to design intercultural learning experiences and activities that range in the following developmental levels:
 - Introducing core concepts
 - Understanding differences
 - Exploring cultural values
 - Navigating identity
 - Managing cultural transitions
 - Communicating successfully
 - Building global teams
 - Resolving differences
 - Developing professionally

As a seasoned trainer and educator, I have used this book with conference participants, preservice teachers, K-12 administrators, and train the trainer workshops. I am continually asked for resources they can use with their groups of educators. *Building Cultural Competence* is at the top of my list and I am sure it will be at the top of yours!

Get your copy of the book today at www.styluspub.com

—Jean Strait
Guest Editor

References from Page 1

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The National Dropout Prevention Center/Network introduces

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Ask, Don't Tell: What We Can Learn From the Youth We Teach

by Letitia Basford and Jamie Keith

What could a teacher do to better honor your culture? Actually, I don't really know. It's never... happened, so I can't exactly pinpoint it and say, "This is what I want."

—Junior high school student responding to a Hamline University undergraduate education student's question during panel

Schools are often alienating places for students of color. As the quote above illustrates, some students of color have **never** had an experience in school that respected, affirmed, or celebrated their cultures.

Perhaps closely related is the fact that the majority of students who are labeled "at risk" are students of color. As a de facto behavior specialist at a Twin Cities public school, Jamie Keith asked junior high students of color why they had been sent from class. These students knew which teachers they connected to and why they learned best from them. They had many ideas about how to make their schools **better**. As educators work to convert schools from white, hegemonic spaces into spaces that nurture all students, who better to take direction from than the students themselves?

To this aim, nine of Jamie's junior high school students initiated panel presentations with about 50 of Letitia Basford's teacher licensure students from Hamline in 2011 and again in 2012. The goal of the panels was twofold: to provide youth of color a platform to share their experiences and to help teacher licensure students to become more effective and culturally responsive educators. Below are the key recommendations that the youth shared. We have framed their perspectives around Gloria Ladson-Billings' (1995) call for culturally relevant pedagogy.

Make Your Classroom Engaging, Culturally Responsive, and Meaningful

The youth echoed Ladson-Billings' (1995) plea for teachers to utilize students' cultures and strengths as

vehicles for learning. For example, one youth stated, "If you have a talkative class, make them do an assignment that gets them talking." They shared their appreciation for opportunities to "write about themselves" and "compare things to their own lives."

Students spoke about times when teachers from different cultural and racial backgrounds attempted unsuccessfully to connect cross-culturally. One youth recalled an offensive experience, "I've had a teacher who... because I was black, he said, 'What's up dawg?'" and I was like, "What?"

The youth urged schools to hire staff from similar backgrounds as the student population so these teachers could serve as cultural liaisons.

Some rules of respect are different in certain cultures. So if you could get [a teacher from that culture], it would probably help because the teacher could explain to the other teacher, "Well he did this because in our culture..."

Treat Students Respectfully

All the youth spoke about times when they felt disrespected by a teacher, whether for relentless disciplining in front of their peers or for an overarching attitude of condescension. For example, one youth shared:

Some teachers talk to us like we're babies, but ... we feel like young adults. And some teachers talk to us like they're our parents and we don't like that either ... we want to be treated how you want to be treated.

Another youth shut down when he stopped understanding his schoolwork. He shared that what he needed most was a "step-by-step way of understanding" assignments, but instead he felt that his teacher gave up on him:

When I was younger, I didn't get all the stuff, so I chose not to do the work. But then a [different] teacher helped me and... I was able to get my work done. [When I returned to my other teacher,] she

gave me a homework assignment and said, "You're not going to do your homework anyway, so you may as well not even take one," and I was kind of mad about that.

Ladson-Billings (1995) describes effective teachers as those who attempt to create bonds with all students that are "fluid and equitable" (p. 163). She urges teachers to spend time helping students who seem furthest behind. Fundamental to all effective teachers is the belief that all students can and must succeed (p. 163).

Give Students a Voice

I learned that a lot of people do understand what I understand when I thought it was just me.

I got to say what was on my mind to people who really care.

—Junior high school students' responses after giving the panel presentation for university students

Ladson-Billings (1995) calls for the kind of teaching that helps students "develop a broader sociopolitical consciousness that allows them to critique the cultural norms... and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities" (p. 162). Through offering "at-risk" youth the opportunity to share their experiences and critical perspectives about effective teaching, these youth felt they were actively engaged in making schools better places. If our schools are about preparing youth to become active, productive citizens, then we need to provide them with opportunities like this—opportunities that enable them to see their voices as catalysts for positive change.

—Letitia Basford, Asst. Prof. Hamline University

—Jamie Keith Participant/Observer

Reference

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory Into Practice*, 34(3).



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Viewpoint

There is no doubt that educators need cultural and linguistic competence. Linguistic competence is the capacity to communicate effectively and convey information in a manner that is easily understood by diverse audiences. Schools are more diverse than ever, with students of color serving as the majority in many schools and districts. Culture and language play critical roles in learning and educators need to know their students' backgrounds. One of the most essential roles of a teacher is to translate cultural knowledge into effective instruction. Culturally competent educators are better able to engage with students' families, and this helps to address the achievement gap.

According to the National Education Association, there are three policy levers through which states can increase educators' cultural and linguistic competence:

1. Preservice education
2. Ongoing professional development
3. Licensure

Less than one third of states require study in cultural diversity, and that includes any kind of field placement in a diverse setting. Teacher Performance Assessments (TPA) in Minnesota are enabling preservice teachers to capture their experiences in their portfolio and video assessment pieces on diversity, which strengthens their initial training. Recent changes in relicensure also are having an impact on practicing teachers' continued cultural competence development. Educators must show evidence of professional development in the following areas: positive behavior interventions; reading preparation; accommodation, modification, and adaption of curriculum materials and instruction; integrating technology effectively with student learning to increase engagement and student achievement; and identifying key warning signs of mental illness in children. Essentially teachers need to have training in how to operate effectively in different cultural contexts by transforming and integrating

knowledge of individual students and groups of students.

The National Center for Cultural Competence states that teachers of this generation must be cultural brokers, and to be effective they will need to demonstrate how to:

- Assess and understand their own cultural identities and value systems
- Recognize the values that guide and mold attitudes and behaviors
- Understand a community's traditional beliefs, values, and practices, as well as changes that occur through acculturation
- Communicate in cross-cultural context
- Interpret and translate information
- Advocate with and on behalf of children, youth, and families
- Negotiate delivery systems

—Jean Strait, Guest Editor
*Professor and Director of the Center
for Excellence in Urban Teaching
Hamline University*