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It's Not Just the Language: Culture as an Essential Element

in Pre-service Teacher Education

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Introduction

We're not even two weeks into this course, and already I feel that the readings are speaking directly to me: to my prejudice, my (unadmitted) racism, my unresolved feelings about foreigners in my country, and all of the sentiments I hold dear about what it means to be American, and what those who are not native to this country "should" be doing to fit in. I am one of those people who have thought, if not actually said, that once they are in the United States, they need to speak English. So, now, I am ashamed that I have been so closed to the real experiences and fears that families confront when in a strange land where [knowledge of] the language, customs, traditions, and social expectations are so different, yet so necessary… (personal communication, May 20, 2009).

The paragraph above was not written by an average citizen on the street, though we have heard these same thoughts expressed by people we've heard on the news and in our own lives, often within debates about immigration reform, desegregation, and other emotion-laden topics. This paragraph was written by a graduate student in a guidance counselor education program in a college of education at a large, urban university in the southeastern U.S.. That this student would be so honest is laudable. However, what does this say about our teacher education programs when educators at advanced levels hold beliefs that are at best uninformed or naive, and at worst detrimental to a substantial portion of our school population? With all that teachers and other

educators need to know about teaching and learning, how important is it to focus on cultural issues faced by English learners?

The most recent U.S. Census shows that the country's population is becoming more diverse, with the result that one out of every three elementary and secondary students is of an ethnic or racial minority group. Of the 48.2 million public school students in the United States, approximately 4.1 million students, or 8.5 percent, are English language learners (ELLs) (USDOE, 2004).

The achievement gap between these diverse learners and white students in schools across the nation is alarming. The Urban Institute's report on ethnic minority graduation rates shows Whites and Asians at 75 and 77 percent respectively, and Hispanics and Blacks at approximately 50 percent (Swanson, 2004). While certainly public schools must find better ways to educate all learners, the growth in the number of ELLs and the pressures of accountability pushes educators to look beyond traditional subject area remediation to tap other sources of students' learning potential, or conversely, to identify roadblocks to student achievement. To say that students face difficulty learning subject matter if they cannot understand or use the language in which it is presented sounds obvious. As a remedy, schools put in place English as a second language or bilingual programs, remedial programs, homework help before and after school, and summer enrichment programs to assist with the language demands of the curriculum. However, many English language learners (ELLs) continue to lag in achievement even with such programs in place. Where else do we look, then, for keys to making linguistic and personal connections that will aid students' learning and raise their levels of achievement? How do we reach beyond language and remedial programs to other sources of engagement that may profoundly affect English learners in our schools?

The Impact of Cultural Differences on Students in Schools

One knowledge area where schools of education must devote more time in terms of coursework and internship placements is that of *culture*. More specifically, educators need to better understand the culturally-influenced predispositions toward learning held by ELLs and their families, and to create more meaningful learning experiences for students striving to become bilingual and bicultural. Knowing *what* to teach is unarguably critical for teachers. However, knowing *to whom* we are teaching it and *how* our students experience learning and interaction is a shift we must make in our approach to teacher education if we expect to shrink the achievement gap that currently exists.

Brice Heath's groundbreaking research (1983) of the literacy experiences of children from three different communities starkly contrasted the disconnection between interactional patterns and uses of literacy in the home cultures of the students and of their schools. A cultural chasm often exists between students' home and school learning environments. Linguistic differences widen the divide.

"If I said something wrong, I was afraid," the words of Lucineyda, a child from the Dominican Republic, recounting what it was like to learn English in school (Reeves, 2005). What does the silence of an English learner mean? Perhaps, as in the case of Lucineyda, it means that the child is used to being smart in school and knows that her low level of English skills almost guarantees that she will make mistakes. She would, therefore, prefer to remain silent than to embarrass herself. For another student who is told every day by his parent to behave in school, if behaving in school in his culture means being silent and listening to the teacher, then that child is obeying his cultural values, often to his own peril. In our schools, a child's performance is the gauge of his knowledge. Remaining silent takes away a large marker of performance, placing a

child at risk for being considered for more remedial work or for special education classes (Reeves, 2005). These are but two brief examples linked to one cultural classroom behavior—silence—which illustrate the complexities of the differences between school and home—teacher and student—cultures when they come into contact in a learning environment.

Exacerbating this home/school cultural divide is the nature of today's teaching workforce. In direct contrast to the growing diversity of the school-aged population, approximately 87-90% of the teaching profession is white (Sleeter, 2001). Further, the teaching profession is also largely monolingual, and the predominant educational program model for English learners is an English-only model carried out by mainstream teachers (Zeichner, 1993).

The aim of this paper is to discuss the critical need for teacher education programs to address the issue of culture in student learning, and the changes that must occur in teacher education programs to create culturally responsive teachers. We discuss the role of culture in the academic struggles of culturally and linguistically diverse students, and cite examples of complex value structures which exacerbate academic conflict for two sample cultural groups. We explore teachers' development of culturally responsive teaching practices through an understanding of both their own cultural identities and those of their students'. Finally, we offer examples of school and teacher education programs that should serve as models for colleges of teacher education wishing to promote culturally responsive teaching practices for teachers of English learners.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students in Schools

Cultural practices shape cognitive processes that serve as the foundation for learning both in and out of school (Hollins, l996). Therefore, meaningful learning environments will be enhanced through the recognition of students' backgrounds and identities in instruction (Nieto, 1999).

Ignoring this link between culture and cognition inevitably leads to cultural and academic fragmentation. Students lack the experience and language to access the curriculum, and teachers lack the cultural and linguistic background to bridge the divide between what students know and what they need to learn. English language instruction in schools often happens piecemeal— through paraprofessionals; English as a second language (ESL) resource teachers who spend minimal time with English learners; and mainstream teachers with varying knowledge about teaching language (blind review, 2006). Students placed in mainstream classes are expected to simply "absorb" much of their language from the environment. Teachers' modification of instruction for greater comprehensibility is often at the basic level of providing visuals or a peer tutor/buddy (Hite & blind review, 2006). Culturally, ELLs enter U.S. classrooms with backgrounds that diverge in large and small ways from the shared experiences of the majority of their classmates. As immigrant students try to acknowledge their new culture and fit into classrooms and with peers, they end up in a game of emotional tug of war between their families and their new culture. This often leads to children feeling ashamed of their home culture while simultaneously facing rejection by their classmates who see them as looking and acting different (Goodwin, 2002). Further, they risk an erosion of native language abilities before they have fully attained competence in English. Standing with a foot in two worlds, but not planted firmly in either, causes great linguistic, cultural, and, inevitably, psychological dissonance (Olsen, 2000). How can effective learning happen under such circumstances? What can we tell pre-service teachers about how they can affect changes for the ELLs in their classes?

For a start, collaborations between ESL, bilingual education, and mainstream classroom teachers can mitigate some of the fragmentation, creating more coherent learning environments for English language learners (ELLs). English learners benefit from continuity, repetition, thematic

instruction, use and development of their L1, and use of multiple modalities in learning subject matter and gaining literacy (Cazden, 2001; Cummins, 1979; Fitzgerald, 2003, 2006; Goodwin, 2002; Snow, 1994; Wong Fillmore, 1991). Shared planning, co-teaching, and communication between ESL, bilingual and mainstream teachers enhance instruction and provide continuity in academic and language learning. Instructional strategies should be built on an understanding of students' cultural predispositions toward learning.

Specifically, students benefit from home/school relationships which value and build upon the cultural funds of knowledge within the students' families and communities (Moll, 1992; Pradl, 2002) and which also take into account in a productive and positive manner the students' home languages. Students bring to the classroom knowledge of histories, culture and life stories. A teacher's knowledge of their students' lives is critical if educators are to respond in culturally relevant and sensitive ways (Goodwin, 2002). Students and teachers alike naturally encounter new information through the lenses of their prior experiences, knowledge and existing beliefs. Villegas and Lucas (2002) state, "preparing teachers to teach children of diverse racial, ethnic, social class, and language backgrounds is a pressing issue in teacher education today and will continue to be for some time to come" (p.20).

Certainly, mainstream teachers need to have a deep understanding of the subject areas they teach. However, even more important is teachers' understanding of the students they teach, and the impact that becoming bicultural has on student learning.

Culture, Teaching and Learning

Regrettably, a "tacos and eggrolls" approach to culture in schools (T. Rodriguez, personal communication, June 20, 2008) commonly drives multicultural curricula, yielding calendars of holidays relevant to ethnic groups or recipe books of representative ethnic cuisine. Indeed,

recognition and celebration of cultural diversity is important; cultural awareness begins with knowledge of cultural diversity, respect for that diversity, and the general recognition that ethnic groups have different values. However, in order to impact achievement, educators must move beyond the perspective of celebratory multiculturalism, prevalent in K-12 classrooms, to a critical multiculturalism (Jay & Jones, 2005). Teachers must realize that they view their daily lives and interactions through their own cultural lens, which shapes the way they understand ideas and ascribe meaning to experiences. Culture, then, becomes the foundation for teachers to learn about and understand their world (Smith-Maddox, 1998) and the worlds of their students.

Culture may best be explained as the learned language, beliefs, values and behaviors infused into every aspect of our lives. People associate with or distinguish themselves from one another through cultural aspects such as race, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, occupation or political ideology (Banks, 1993; Bullivant, 1993; and Jordan, 1992). Educational settings bring together members of diverse ethnicities, religions, nationalities, and sexualities. Teachers, who are overwhelmingly white, female, heterosexual and middle class (Goodwin, 2002) must understand the role of culture in the classroom and develop a reflexive practice that facilitates learning and eases the stress of culture shock and acculturation for their students.

Culture shapes students' interactions with the world, impacting their thought processes and their behavior (Vygotsky, 1978). Tyler et al (2008) put it this way:

…research stemming from the Russian troika (Alexander Luria, Alexander Leontiev, and Lev Vygotsky) during the second and third quarters of the 20th century was instrumental in helping education researchers better understand that task performance was a function of the historically situated, socially transmitted cultural values individuals possessed (p. 283).

Students' approaches to activities and the resultant development of thought processes (cognition) are a function of historically situated and socially transmitted cultural values as they interact with the expectations of the classroom environment and of the teacher. Conflict results when the cultural approaches to learning that are taught in the home are not congruent with the cultural orientation to learning required in the classroom. This impedes student learning, resulting in the previously cited achievement gap.

The schooling system in the U.S. promotes and rewards individualism and competition. To be successful in U.S. schools, students must demonstrate the ability to achieve individually (Triandis, 2000; Tyler, et al, 2008). Further, achievement is measured against others—student-to-student, classroom-to-classroom, school-to-school, or state-to-state. Standardized testing of students and the grading of schools is the most salient example of this value. These traditional U.S. school characteristics may or may not match with the cultural values and characteristics of English learners.

For Latino cultures, interconnectedness—between members of a household and between households—is highly valued (Rogoff, 2003). Individuals have a responsibility to conduct themselves in such a way as maintains or advances the family or group. Respect for elders and proper behavior is emphasized in Latino homes (Greenfield, Quiroz and Raeff, 2000; Wortham and Contreras, 2002). In fact, the Spanish word *educación* is related to a child's ability to exhibit appropriate behaviors with respect to elders and public comportment. If a child misbehaves, he is considered *mal educado*, literally translated as poorly educated. Another cultural attribute in many Latino homes is what Wortham and Contreras (2002) call spatiotemporal fluidity—simultaneity in activities—or an active engagement in several activities occurring at the same time. In addition,

teachers are highly respected in Latino cultures, often leading to a hands-off approach by parents in terms of involvement in classroom issues.

As with Latino cultures, Asian-American families also value collectivism, but the role of the individual within the family is often perceived somewhat differently from Latino families. While the individual and the family are inextricably linked, a high premium is placed on the achievement of individual family members to enhance the reputation of the family. Emotional self-control, conformity to norms, and humility are other traits valued by Asian cultures (Kim, Li, and Ng, 2005). The resultant behaviors and approaches to learning by students of Asian origin may more closely map to the behaviors expected and rewarded in U.S. classrooms. As with Latino cultures, teachers are considered a highly respected authority, and students will tend to be indirect or stay quiet to avoid potential conflict or to place themselves in the spotlight (Park and Kim, 2008).

These are but two broad examples whose purpose is to direct educators to take a more critical look at culture and learning. Myriad perspectives exist within Latino and Asian cultures. The point of the illustration, however, is that the more we know about students' and teachers' levels of identification (conscious and unconscious) with particular groups and sub-groups, and the more we know about those specific groups, the more accurately we can predict, explain, and understand the interactions in the classroom (Banks, 1993), or perhaps even more important, ask knowledgeable questions rather than rushing to judgment from our own perspectives. Teachers, as the agents of cultural negotiation in a classroom, must develop a deep understanding of how culture affects not only students and their learning, but most especially teachers' own participation in the development of a culturally responsive learning environment. To achieve this, teachers must strive to look critically at their own culture; recognize, understand, and value the characteristics of

the cultures represented in the classroom; and interact and teach in a manner that responds to the cultural strengths of students and facilitates their understanding of themselves, one another, and the academic learning environment. This ultimate goal of developing culturally responsive teachers and learning environments cannot be accomplished without deep reflection within each of these areas.

Teachers' Understanding of Their Own Cultures

In order for teachers to engage in reflection of how culture affects teaching and learning behaviors, they first need an understanding of their own culture. This development of a self social-cultural consciousness starts with teachers' fundamental recognition that they possess a culture. In a study of pre-service teachers, Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark (2007) found that many white female pre-service teachers view culture as a component of membership to a minority group, where culture is the holding place for perceived differences from the white mainstream. They see themselves as not having a culture, but as being "American." While developing their self social-cultural consciousness, teachers begin to recognize their own cultural values and beliefs—in essence, their identity. As they begin to reflect upon their complex multidimensional identity, they are better able to see their race, ethnicity, social class, gender, language, religion, and sexual orientation as part of a larger multicultural society (Banks, 1993). By developing a strong sense of who they are socially and culturally, the hope is that teachers will be better able to reflect critically on their own beliefs (Villegas & Lucas, 2002), which will be the first step toward expanding their conceptualization of their students' cultures. This journey is a continuous process requiring reflection and reconstruction of their own thought processes and responses (Zygmunt-Fillwalk & Clark, 2007).

A critical study of multiculturalism moves from teaching members of the dominant culture to have sympathy or appreciation for minority cultures to promoting reflection on the institutional/social privileges that exist for the dominant culture (Allen, 1999), often invisible to members of the majority culture. Whites do not see how socially privileged they are because they know so little about the daily experiences and challenges of members of the minority cultures and, further, are unaware of the protections they experience as a function of their membership in the majority culture (McIntosh, 1997).

As teachers explore their self social-cultural consciousness, they gain insights into their membership to race, ethnicity, social class, language, and gender groups, and how those attachments have shaped their beliefs, behaviors and, ultimately, their teaching practices. Their critical thoughts, as a result of this self-reflection, can serve as a catalyst for transforming their beliefs into positive instructional action when working with ELLs (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). When teachers begin the journey of exploring their own identity, they have taken the first step in understanding others' cultures.

Teachers' Understanding of their Students' Cultures

In addition to understanding their own cultures, teachers need an understanding of the culture, race, ethnicity, language, and social class of their students. These characteristics comprise students' lived experiences and ultimately affect the way students learn, think and behave (Gay and Kirkland, 2003; Montgomery, 2001). The more teachers learn about their students' cultural backgrounds, the better they are able to understand and explain their students' engagement in the classroom.

While it is impossible for teachers to gain an insider's perspective of all the cultures represented in their classrooms, there is much that teachers can learn about their students'

approaches to interaction and learning. For example, teachers need to know which ethnic groups embrace cooperative problem solving, how different groups interact with adults, and how gender plays a role in socialization of children (Gay, 2002). Once teachers are equipped with knowledge of their students, they can then begin to use instructional practices which best match their students' strengths. Continuous self-reflection is imperative for teachers, so that they can monitor their personal beliefs and instructional behaviors to make their teaching more relevant to diverse students (Gay and Kirkland, 2003).

Noordhoff and Kleinfeld (1993) sum up the discussion in this way:

…teaching demands knowledge about students and their frames of reference. We also hold that a primary obligation of being a teacher is to create learning environments so that students from diverse groups will have an equal opportunity to learn from school (p.28).

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) takes on many names in the literature including "culturally relevant" teaching (Ladson-Billing, 1995b), "culturally critical consciousness" (Gay & Kirkland, 2003), and "culturally appropriate" teaching (Au, 1980). Culturally responsive teaching is "using the cultural characteristics, experiences and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002, p. 106).

What conditions promote culturally responsive teaching? Often well-meaning teachers adopt the "We're all alike under our skin" or colorblindness approach in their classrooms, which at best is misguided, and at worst damaging to students, particularly ELLs. Coming from vastly different backgrounds and often languages, they are clearly not all the same. Teachers must begin by not being afraid of student differences. Jay and Jones (2005) assert that "to treat someone equally is to recognize their right to difference. Equality is not sameness. Difference is not the

enemy; inequality is the enemy (p. 112)." When teachers attempt to see all of their students as the same, the effect is not to see their students at all (Allen, 1999; Montgomery, 2001).

Learning about challenges faced by culturally and linguistically diverse learners can assist teachers to battle some of the invisible yet powerful forces that work to undermine student identity and empowerment. Issues as simple, yet so profoundly personal, as a student's name can represent the fundamental struggle for identity and achievement experienced by ELLs and their families. Souto-Manning (2007) describes an agonizing situation in which a Mexican mother decided to give her youngest son, Idelbrando, a new name (Tommy) after her two older sons—Antonio and Nicolas—struggled in school. The mother decided to give her son an "American" name "…so that no one would know he is Mexican, so that he would have a better chance to be successful in school than his brothers" (p. 402). This came to light when the teacher met with her, confused that Tommy was supposed to be in her class but instead there was a boy who told her his name was Idelbrando. Souto-Manning states that students—often through their parents—will assimilate to mask the very cultural and linguistic backgrounds that define who they are.

The question then becomes how do we transform classrooms into culturally responsive spaces honoring ELL students' cultures and languages, and adopt teaching practices that engage students in meaningful learning in order to reduce their emotional discord and impact the achievement gap that persists in schools? Systemic change must take place at all levels of education, from preK-12 education, driven by well-planned changes to teacher education programs. But what do these programs look like? How is attention to culture manifested in different settings for different cultural groups? Furthermore, where do we begin if we wish to make a real impact for students? The key must be a multifaceted approach with teacher education

as the central change agent. The next section provides examples where teacher education programs play a critical role in innovative programs that promote culturally responsive teaching.

Culturally Responsive Education in Action

University/school and school/community partnerships are an excellent way to begin developing culturally responsive educational environments. Partnerships between university teacher education programs and local schools provide preservice teachers with authentic opportunities for engaging with ethnically and linguistically diverse students in supervised settings while allowing diverse learners an increased awareness of the world of higher education. Likewise, school/community partnerships are an excellent vehicle for greater understanding between teachers and students through bridging home and school cultures by adapting cultural styles of interaction and learning to a school setting. Examples of successful university/school and school/community collaborations are illustrated in the next sections.

Developing CRT Through Teacher Education Program/School Partnerships

La Clase Mágica (LCM), an after-school project originating in San Diego, is an adaptation of a successful program called The Fifth Dimension, whose focus was on learning through collaboration and play in an educational computer-based fantasy world (Vasquez, 2003). LCM's effectiveness is the result of considerable collaboration with the local community to modify the computer game for the local context. Five principles guided program development: 1) valuing and including the cultural and linguistic resources of the local community; 2) supporting multiplicity and diversity; 3) exhibiting a commitment to change; 4) creating partnerships with local community members; and 5) incorporating a multigenerational approach. While the computer game retained a focus on role-playing and problem solving, changes involved using names from Mexican culture and incorporating Spanish. Though the goal of the program is enhanced academic

achievement for the ELLs in the after-school program, a critical, parallel goal is to help the children develop "the means to negotiate the social and intellectual life of the academy" (Vasquez, 2003, p. 25) while maintaining strong ties to their own culture and language.

The link between the university and the after-school program allows preservice teachers to observe and develop culturally responsive teaching practices through mutually-beneficial relationships. LCM gives pre-service teachers from a local university the opportunity to get to know and interact with English learners and their families, while providing the children with real life connections to higher education. Parents are encouraged to attend with their children, creating a multigenerational environment. Children can choose to interact within the computer game in English or Spanish.

Duplicated in five additional sites in southern California, LCM serves both Spanish-speaking and Native American communities. A final hallmark of the program is the goal of transferring oversight of the program sites to the local communities through parent and community training. To date, the program has improved both student achievement and school attendance. It is too early to assess its impact on students' graduation rates or enrollment in post-secondary institutions. Additional information can be found on the program's website--http://lcm.ucsd.edu/LaClaseMagica/Home.html.

Another program which impacts both a local context and teacher education is the *Teachers for Alaska (TFA)* Program. Formed to address the needs of Eskimo and Indian children in isolated Alaskan native villages, TFA was established as a certification program for secondary teachers, and was founded on the principle that teachers need to learn theory, philosophy, substantive knowledge and pedagogical strategies in connection to the Indian and Eskimo populations in Alaska (Noordhoff and Kleinfeld, 1993). TFA teachers study research on communication patterns

and theories of sociolinguistics, the history and culture of Alaska's Indian and Eskimo groups, and political and lifestyle issues facing these diverse groups. The focus is on helping beginning teachers learn how to learn experientially about their students and those students' families (Cazden & Mehan, 1989). The preservice teachers' orientations toward teaching culturally diverse students shifting from teaching a quantity of material to that of engaging the students in learning, which entailed taking into account the students' background knowledge, communication styles, frames of reference and vocabulary knowledge (Noordhoff and Kleinfeld, 1993). Cultural responsivity to students was generated by a targeted approach to teaching pre-service teachers how to think about specific groups of students in specific contexts, rather than by taking a generic approach to culture and multicultural education. Program specifics, including cultural information about the different Alaska indigenous groups, can be found at http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/Publications/teachers.html.

Yet another example of reconceptualizing education for diverse language learners is a collaboration between the Initiative for Culturally Responsive Evaluation (ICRE) at the University of Kansas and the Cherokee Nation. The Cherokee Nation has been instrumental in establishing Cherokee language revitalization programs in schools and in the community. The Cherokee have recognized that in addition to establishing linguistically empowering classes, the accompanying evaluation model for the revitalization efforts must also be culturally responsive (Peter, 2003). An Immersion Team was developed to plan for the first Cherokee immersion program in an elementary school. Comprised of representatives from the Cherokee Nation and the university, an important role for the Immersion Team was to develop culturally responsive evaluation practices. This participatory evaluation model—which features evaluation done *for* and *with* the target population—is sensitive to the values of the Cherokee People as it emanates from their

perspectives, observations and reflections on learning (Peter, 2003), benefiting the children, the community and the knowledge base of the university teacher educators involved with the program.

Developing CRT Through School/Community Partnerships

While CRT in teacher education programs can be promoted directly through collaborations between schools and university teacher education programs, links between the community and schools have also proven fruitful for making inroads to culturally responsive teaching in schools, which in turn provide positive learning environments for preservice teachers. This linking of home culture to school programs is exemplified in the Kamehameha Early Education Program (KEEP) for elementary students and the Puente Project for secondary and college students.

KEEP was designed to promote academic success for underachieving native Hawaiian children. KEEP began in 1972 with a goal to raise language arts standardized scores from the 27th percentile to the national mean of the 50th percentile. To provide culturally responsive instruction to the students, changes were made to instructional practices, classroom organization, and the motivation management system to more closely mirror the native Hawaiian home. These changes were reflected in the reading program developed for children in grades K to 3 (Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp, 1993).

The ways KEEP bridges home and school culture are consistent with culturally responsive teaching approaches. The unique interaction patterns of the home are promoted in the school by organizing students into small heterogeneous groups within the classroom and creating independent spaces for group work. This provides opportunities for authentic cooperative learning and peer group interaction, and encourages peer assistance, common ways of learning in the Hawaiian home. Another example of bridging home and school culture is the implementation of

talk story. Talk story--"overlapping speech, voluntary turn-taking, co-narration and joint construction of a story" (p. 57)--is used in lieu of the traditional hand raising/one-at-a-time turn-taking for answering questions and discussion. Talk story is a major speech event in Hawaiian culture that results in discourse patterns unlike those found in traditional classrooms. Students build upon each other's answers through interaction and the sharing of personal experiences (Au, 1980).

The KEEP model was also adapted for use with Navajo children, resulting in the KEEP-Rough Rock Project (Vogt, Jordan, and Tharp, 1993). This project was implemented in a third grade classroom on a Navajo reservation by adapting the instructional practice, classroom organization, and motivation management to the Navajo culture. For reading instruction, Navajo children preferred discussing stories as a whole rather than breaking them down for analysis. Centers were used at the Rough Rock school, but in response to cultural norms, groups were created along gender lines, producing much greater interaction than heterogeneous groups. As with the Hawaiian KEEP program, the KEEP-Rough Rock Project helped to raise children's academic achievement, supporting the value of culturally responsive teaching with culturally and linguistically diverse students.

The Puente Project was initially conceived at the community college level, then adapted for secondary school students. Puente, meaning "bridge" in Spanish, was founded in 1981 by Felix Galaviz and Patricia McGrath, at Chabot College in Hayward, California as a way to increase the number of Mexican American students attending four-year colleges and universities. A high school version of its program--The Puente High School English Program--followed in 1993. Puente projects currently are offered in 33 high schools and 59 community colleges throughout California (http://www.puente.net/about/). Puente students come from families where neither

parent holds a university degree; 48% come from families where neither parent attended college. The Puente framework requires that a class stay together for two years with the same teacher, and Puente teachers received professional development in Puente program principles.

The Puente Project has three structural components: 1) A year of intensive English instruction that focuses on students' cultural identity; 2) counselors in the English classroom who are prepared to assist students with academic and cultural challenges; and 3) mentors from the Latino professional community (Laden, 1999). The literature curriculum incorporates teacher-selected texts and readings by Mexican-American and Latino authors, and employs methods such as reading aloud in performance format (with a dialogue-laden book like *Coffee Will Make You Black*), or character interview formats (with a character-driven book such as *Like Water for Chocolate*). Students may also write comparisons of texts across genres and authors, such as comparing the marriage arrangements in *Romeo and Juliet* with *Like Water for Chocolate.* Cultural elements are not just brought in as adjunct materials or activities to the traditional curriculum. Rather they form the core of the curriculum, planned in a thoughtful manner to maximize cultural and academic student learning (Cazden, 2001). Students' cultures are further incorporated into the curriculum through experiential learning from field trips related to Mexican American culture such as touring wall murals in San Francisco's Mission District or attending performances at the Teatro Familia Aztlan. Students are encouraged to use Spanish verbally and in their writing to enhance their expression and their understanding.

The impact of Puente on student achievement was recognized in 2004 by the Pathways to College Network, a national consortium of educational institutions, foundations and non-profit organizations, as one of six model programs to guide policymakers in improving student success. The Network report, *A Shared Agenda: A Leadership Challenge to Improve College Access and*

Success, lists six guiding principles for student success, the third pertaining directly to culturally responsive teaching--"Embrace social, cultural, and learning-style differences in developing learning environments and activities for underserved students" (Pathways to College Network, 2004, p. 6).

Concluding Thoughts on Culturally Responsive Teaching in Action

The success of these sample programs at the elementary, secondary, and teacher education levels shows promise for impacting achievement for culturally and linguistically diverse learners. A key element in their success is creating cultural frameworks that honor and build upon the home cultures of the students, and promote culturally responsive teaching practices for new teachers. The question then becomes--How can pre-service teacher education programs be restructured to assist new teachers in developing the skills needed to apply the principles of CRT to their local contexts? What elements should be present to lay the groundwork for expanding the corps of skilled teachers and knowledgeable advocates for English learners? A discussion of these issues follows.

Developing Culturally Responsive Teachers of ELLs Through Teacher Education

Changing student demographics and the achievement gap between mainstream students and culturally and linguistically diverse students must galvanize teacher preparation programs to rethink how their curriculum prepares pre-service teachers to work effectively with diverse students (Goodwin, 2002). Typically, all pre-service teachers take at least one multicultural education survey course which explores culture as a theoretical construct, provides historical perspective for the various linguistic and ethnic minorities in the U.S., discusses cultures in contact, and provides a knowledge base of cultural characteristics of various groups (Noordhoff &

Kleinfeld, 1993). However, new teachers experience difficulty in relating this new knowledge to their classrooms, which they generally enter quite some time after taking the multicultural course.

If teacher education programs are to impact new teachers' abilities to build culturally responsive learning environments for their ELLs, then several steps must be taken: 1) Infuse multicultural and linguistic knowledge throughout the teacher education core courses—e.g. curriculum, methods, assessment, and classroom management; 2) Place pre-service teachers in field work contexts that would provide rich experiences with ELLs, their families and communities; and 3) Require sustained and specific reflections on preservice teachers' experiences and their growth as culturally responsive educators.

Acknowledging, addressing and reflecting upon cultural and linguistic issues as they occur throughout teacher education programs would provide context and immediacy to multicultural concepts (Zeichner, Grant, Gay, Gillette, Valli, & Villegas, 1998). Curriculum courses would focus on culturally responsive and linguistically appropriate curricular materials, particularly those that utilize the students' native language; methods courses on instructional methods which scaffold students' language development and support their cultural predilections to learning; measurement courses on assessment instruments and approaches that allow for meaningful assessment of language and learning for planning instruction; and classroom management courses on classroom arrangements and instructional methods that capitalize on students' learning strengths and interactive styles. In fact, classroom management is an often-overlooked aspect of fostering culturally responsive classrooms in teacher education programs. Academic achievement can be greatly enhanced by a broader focus on the physical arrangement of a classroom, the nature of interactions in and out of the classroom, and community building which takes into account

interactional patterns of the various cultures represented in the class rather than imposing the typical patterns of individualism and competition (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke & Curran, 2004).

Some teacher education programs in states with large numbers of language minority students have a thread of required coursework focusing on the linguistic and cultural issues in teaching ELLs. Partnering between these courses and literacy and subject area courses would enhance pre-service teachers' experiences and provide a more authentic environment for exploring the many cultural and linguistic issues in diverse classrooms.

In addition to addressing culturally responsive teaching throughout the coursework, teacher education programs should be closely aligned to the contexts in which their students will teach. Pre-service teachers will benefit from these alliances by practicing how to learn from the students and the communities in which they work. By being systematically immersed in diverse settings, pre-service teachers will learn to understand a broad array of contexts, consider educational goals, and make instructional decisions to fit perceived contexts and appropriate goals (Noordhoff & Kleinfeld, 1993, p. 30).

Pre-service teachers should gain experience in diverse school contexts in conjunction with or even prior to learning theories and methods. They should practice clearly identifying and articulating specific issues in student learning rather than jumping straight to a list of strategies for their subject area lesson plans. In other words, move the students, rather than the subject matter or the instructional strategies, to the center of the instructional agenda. As teachers focus on the students in relation to the context and the subject matter to be taught, effective methods for achieving academic goals will follow.

Providing pre-service teachers with sustained opportunities for engaging with culturally and linguistically diverse students may mean reevaluating the field placements and internships in

teacher education programs. Often intern partnerships occur out of convenience--proximity to the university, or a connection with an administrator or teacher at the school. Interns need to be placed mindfully in culturally diverse classrooms to provide significant experience with diverse students. Ideally, the cooperating teacher would be well-versed in teaching linguistic minority students and would work collaboratively with university personnel to guide the pre-service teacher's development.

Finally, sustained, meaningful reflective inquiry must be an integral part of pre-service teachers' experiences, going beyond levels of discussing ideas, events and philosophical beliefs. Deep culture issues such as identity (teachers' and learners') would be explored in the pre-service teachers' reflections, and they would be challenged to critically analyze their thoughts and reconstruct their knowledge, a process termed "inner work" (Howard, 1999). Teacher educators would provide guided practice in self-reflection as the pre-service teachers progress through their coursework, internships and other relevant learning experiences, emphasizing that teachers need to continue to develop their self social-cultural consciousness throughout their educational careers.

Further, pre-service teachers must be challenged to be explicit about how they will create culturally responsive learning environments by connecting curricular goals to their students' experiences and interests, and they need to learn to evaluate their efforts. Videotaping should be used frequently during field placements to view pre-service teachers' interactions with students and approaches to the lessons they construct (Noordhoff & Kleinfeld, 1993) rather than relying on their perceptions of their lessons. Working in groups to deconstruct these videotaped lessons will enhance their ability to reflect on their own development.

Reflections should also take into account the larger social and political contexts in which schools operate. Pre-service teachers need to develop a knowledge of the ways that the structure of

schools--disciplines, resources, program design, tracking, testing--can privilege some groups of students while marginalizing others (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke & Curran, 2004). Observations of student behaviors and engagement in classrooms should be interrogated in pre-service teachers' reflections as part of their growing understanding of their students' cultural characteristics and expressions. Critical reflection can lead teachers to question their own belief structures and assumptions about student behavior, which can lead to real and sustained changes in how they work with their culturally and linguistically diverse students.

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