Professional Learning for Culturally Responsive Teaching

Equity Matters: In Learning, for Life.

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Communities Flourish When Equity Matters

- Education expands our understanding of ourselves, the worlds in which we live, and the possibilities of what we can become.

- Students have a right to high-quality learning opportunities in which their cultures, language, and experiences are valued and used to guide their learning.

- Equity is measured by the degree to which people belong, feel included, and are empowered.

- Universal equity cannot be achieved without creating systems that embody the principles of everyday justice.

Professional Learning for Culturally Responsive Teaching

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Professional learning for culturally responsive teaching has the potential to address achievement gaps across ethnic groups and disproportionate representation in special education for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This Equity In Action has a twofold purpose: *(a) to demonstrate the need for rethinking current approaches to professional learning and (b) to provide guidelines for professional learning for culturally responsive teaching, as well as research-supported examples of schools and districts engaged in this process.*

Professional Learning For Culturally Responsive Teaching

At a time in the United States when schools across the country have labored to improve results for All students as a result of massive policy changes, several key outcomes remain intractable. Two outcomes, in particular, remain troubling; achievement gaps across ethnic groups of students persist, and subgroups of students from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds continue to be identified and placed in special education at disproportionate rates (Artiles & Bal, 2008; Teese et al., 2007). According to the most recent analysis of national data, the risk for disproportionality for African American students in some states is as high as 4 times as likely as for all other students in the category of emotional disturbance and as low as 25 percent as likely in other states (Sullivan & Kozleski, 2008). As special education reform efforts shift to focus on early intervening in general education classrooms, an important aspect of redressing disproportionality remains teachers' access to resources and professional learning opportunities that can help them redesign learning environments to address the educational needs of their increasingly diverse students.

This approach is called culturally responsive teaching, which is defined by Ladson-Billings (1995a) as possessing these eight principles:

- Communication of High Expectations
- Active Teaching Methods
- Teacher as Facilitator
- Inclusion of Students who are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
- Cultural Sensitivity
- Reshaping the Curriculum
- Student-Controlled Classroom Discourse
- Small Group Instruction and Academically-Related Discourse

In a National Academy of Sciences commissioned review of learning theory and research, Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000) located this model in the so-called student-centered approaches. Developing a knowledge base that is grounded in the notions of culturally responsive teaching is an important leap forward in understanding the gap between students' experiences and histories and teachers' knowledge and expectations about what schools and classrooms are supposed to look like. However, as the Report of the AERA Panel on Research in Teacher Education (Cochran-Smith & Zeichner, 2005) suggests, the preparation of new teachers is only recently addressing the link between culture and learning in substantive ways. This means that the current teaching force has had little formal preparation in conceptualizing and framing practice as cultural work and/or through a cultural prism. Professional learning must therefore assume an important role in engaging practicing teachers in examining and transforming their own practice in ways that acknowledge the critical role that culture and language play in learning.

There is much to celebrate about the increasingly sophisticated understanding of the role of professional learning in the teaching profession. Ongoing professional learning is more and more

localized in classrooms rather than in traditional professional development workshops (Bransford et al., 2000). This approach elevates the role of the teacher as learner and is influencing the ways in which states, school districts, and local public schools are making time for ongoing professional learning among teachers.

However, much professional learning research and practice still omits discussion about cultural considerations. At times, the need for understanding the cultural nature of teaching and learning is noted without in-depth analysis about how culture mediates student and teacher classroom interactions and learning processes. This practitioner brief is designed to explore a missing dimension of professional learning: Culturally Responsive Teaching.

Professional learning for culturally responsive teaching is grounded in research on teacher learning that is mindful of the role culture plays in the knowledge that educators bring to their practice, as well as how educators learn and make sense of their daily practice. It also emphasizes how educators' biographies, professional identities, and awareness of the technical (e.g., how-to), contextual (e.g., how circumstances shape the ways things are), and critical (e.g., the social justice lens) aspects of education impact their professional practice.

We begin this piece on *Equity In Action* by highlighting a set of principles to guide professional learning experiences that foster culturally responsive teaching. Next, we identify four key arenas that have been at the forefront of teacher learning research in the last 10 years. Finally, we provide exemplars of professional learning efforts for culturally responsive teaching from each research arena, that are grounded in the professional learning principles, and which demonstrate professional learning opportunities that prepare teachers to work for equity, participation, and access for All students.

Key Principles Of Professional Learning To Prepare Culturally Responsive Teachers

Professional learning principles emerged from a variety of research traditions, particularly those focused on sociocultural perspectives, which explore the relationship between individual psychological characteristics and a practice based model of human development and learning (Artiles, 1996; Rogoff, 1990, 2003). This theory of human development enables us to understand the ways in which children's and adults' participation in everyday (cultural) practices—whether they take place in classrooms, homes, or playgrounds—shape their development and learning.

This model also requires that we focus on the meaning and purpose of the activities in which people participate. Sometimes the meanings and purposes of activities are defined by a community's traditions, but event interpretations and goals are often negotiated in situ. Further, learners (e.g., students, teachers) use cognitive, social, and affective resources appropriated in their own communities to participate in formal and informal learning environments.

However, learners' performance in everyday activities is not solely shaped by their own developmental characteristics. Performance is also mediated by the nature of events (e.g., linguistic and cognitive demands, etc.) and the institutional conditions in which events take place (e.g., rules, assigned roles, expectations) (Gallego et al., 2001).

Professional learning that is informed by these key assumptions can better prepare teachers to practice culturally responsive teaching. As we explain in this brief, this kind of professional learning provides teachers with opportunities for and guidance in the examination of how their own beliefs and knowledge about teaching are mediated by their educational experiences and sociocultural backgrounds as well as institutional and situational demands of their work. Knowledge about teaching must be more than a deep understanding of subject matter. Although content knowledge is an important element related to professional learning, culturally responsive practice infuses content with an understanding of the cultural nature of learning.

Understanding the need to explore personal and professional identities as well as the necessity of responding to the strengths and needs that students from all cultural backgrounds bring to classrooms, The Equity Alliance at ASU has generated a set of principles to guide culturally responsive professional learning. The principles were influenced by research from the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE), the research of McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) with teacher learning communities around the nation, and the work of the National Staff Development Council.

Principles Of Professional Learning To Prepare Culturally Responsive Teachers

The Equity Alliance at ASU's professional learning principles are described below:

PRINCIPLE 1: Our Professional Learning is focused on improving learning within a diverse, multicultural community. The outcomes, content, and activities of any professional learning activity must be grounded in the multicultural context that characterizes most contemporary urban communities.

PRINCIPLE 2: Professional Learning engages educators in joint, productive activity through discourse, inquiry, and public professional practice. Effective professional learning is reached by continuous, collaborative interaction with colleagues through discussion, knowledge development and understanding, and directed inquiry around professional practice.

PRINCIPLE 3: Professional Learning is a facet of daily living, not a compartmentalized activity. Since professional learning is embedded within practice, it becomes part of daily discourse, shared discussions about student learning and student products, as well as more formalized mentoring and coaching, meetings, study groups, and examination of evidence from inquiry cycles.

PRINCIPLE 4: Professional Learning results in improved learning for students who have been marginalized from the academic and social curricula of the U. S. public school system. Professional learning provides opportunities for teachers to explore and understand the influence of individual cultural identity and values on individual and systems practices, as well as expand their professional knowledge of the sociocultural dimensions of learning, and its impact assessed through student involvement and performance in academic and social curricula.

PRINCIPLE 5: Professional Learning influences decisions about what is taught and why. Since professional learning is generative, educators' knowledge will expand and become more complex as it develops. It is expected that professional learning will result in the use of a cultural perspective in the examination and improvements to the content and process of instruction for all learners.

PRINCIPLE 6: Professional Learning focuses on the diffusion of professional knowledge to build sustainable educational communities focused on improving learning outcomes for all students and their families, particularly those students who are members of cultural and linguistic minorities. As educators gain knowledge, they also have the responsibility for sharing and mentoring others both in the practice of professional learning and in the expanded knowledge that comes from such activity (Kozleski, 2005, p. 7).

Four Arenas For Teacher Learning

Four key arenas have been at the forefront of research on teacher learning in the last 10 years-

- Professional learning through teacher inquiry
- Professional learning situated in professional learning communities
- Professional learning schools
- Content knowledge research that leads to content specific pedagogy

(Figure 1 on the next page)

Figure 1 has many features that we describe in detail throughout this brief, but the big idea is that the four arenas are alternative ways of promoting teacher learning, which overlap and are interlaced with professional learning principles that are grounded in concepts of equity, participation, and access for All.

While these arenas have become part of teacher education rhetoric, and, increasingly, practice, they are less frequently explored as facets of teachers' journeys towards cultural responsiveness in their practice. In the four exemplars that follow, we provide examples of professional learning opportunities that infuse a commitment to diverse communities of learners in their approach to learning, assessing, and improving practice. While all four professional exemplars are grounded in research on culturally responsive teacher and student learning, each foregrounds some but perhaps not all of the Equity Alliance at ASU's professional learning principles. We hope that you draw specific ideas for your own professional learning through the review of these exemplars.

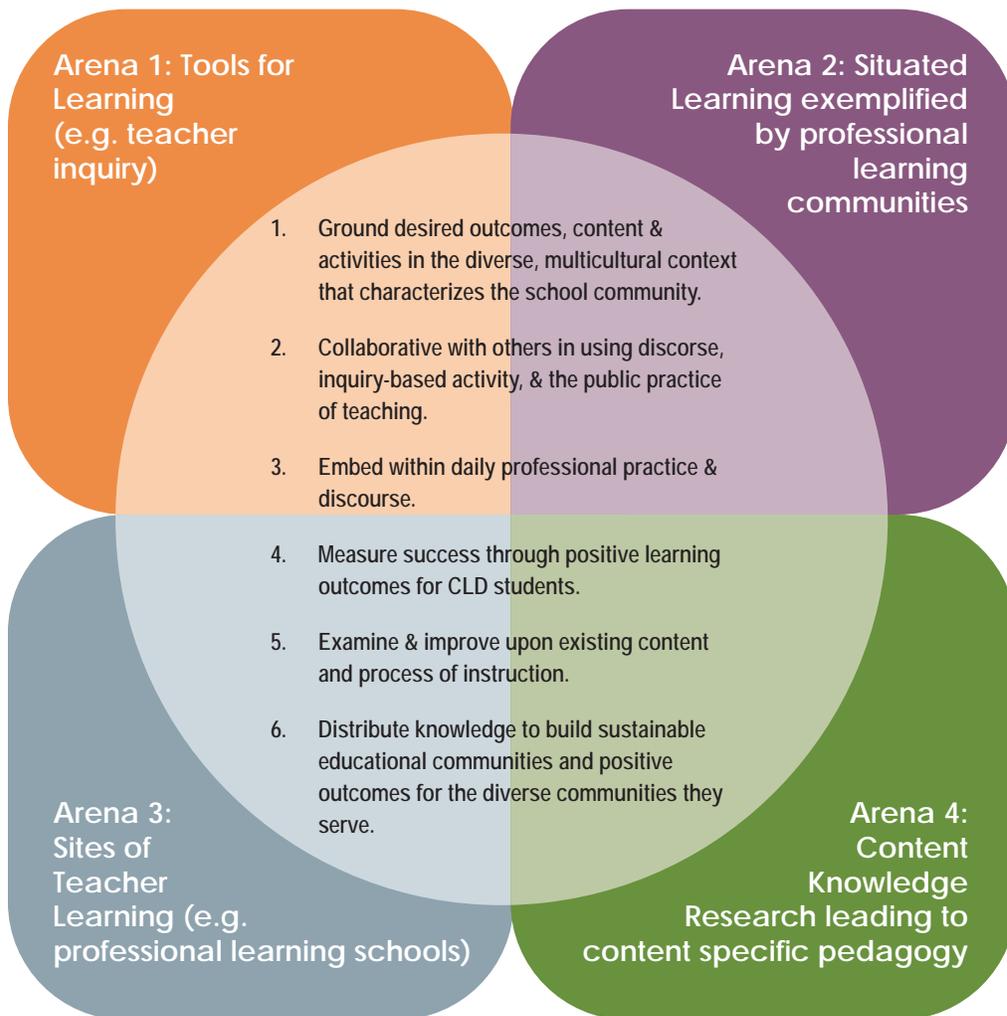**Equity Alliance Professional Learning Principles**

Arena 1: Tools for Learning (e.g. teacher inquiry)

Arena 2: Situated Learning exemplified by professional learning communities

1. Ground desired outcomes, content & activities in the diverse, multicultural context that characterizes the school community.

2. Collaborative with others in using discorse, inquiry-based activity, & the public practice of teaching.

3. Embed within daily professional practice & discourse.

4. Measure success through positive learning outcomes for CLD students.

5. Examine & improve upon existing content and process of instruction.

6. Distribute knowledge to build sustainable educational communities and positive outcomes for the diverse communities they serve.

Arena 3: Sites of Teacher Learning (e.g. professional learning schools)

Arena 4: Content Knowledge Research leading to content specific pedagogy

Figure 1

Professional Learning Through Teacher Inquiry: The Madison Teacher Inquiry Project Exemplar

The Madison Metropolitan School District received a $79,000 grant from the MacArthur/Spencer Professional Development Research and Documentation Foundations to fund a study of the district's action research professional development program. This program was grounded in the premise that research on teacher learning is best promoted through ongoing, collaborative and constructivist inquiry approaches, and when practiced, discourse, and the results of professional learning are made public.

A report on the findings of the two-year study was published in 1998 (Caro-Bruce & Zeichner), which documented the collaboration between the University of Wisconsin-Madison's School of Education and the School District. The Madison District's model of action research considered the classroom as a research laboratory where teachers formulated their own research questions and carried it out over the course of a school year or more. Then, the teacher researchers met once a month in groups of 4-10 for half or full days. Teachers who had previously participated in the action research project served as facilitators for the groups, which were comprised of individu-als from different schools across the district common in terms of grade level, thematic interests, or both. Teachers were allotted 6 days of paid professional learning leave per school year. Researchers wrote reports on their research results, which were distributed to all schools across the district, abstracts of their research were available on the district's web page, and annual research conferences were held in order for researchers to disseminate their findings.

Also important to consider when implementing models of action research is how it serves to inform teacher practice and what happens in classrooms as a

result, as well as how teacher researchers make dispositional changes in how they think about and conceptualize their thinking and collaborations with others.

Teacher expertise is often considered the most significant school-based influence on student learning (Darling-

Hammond, 2000; McCaffrey, Lockwood, Koretz, & Hamilton, 2003; Rice, 2003). Therefore, it is important to not only ask, what should teachers be able to do as a result of participating in professional learning, but also, what should students be able to do as a result? The Madison School District's professional learning approach exemplifies all of our Professional Learning Principles, including focus on improved student learning, a facet of daily living, and diffusion of professional knowledge. Student learning outcomes were measured through teachers' reports of observed improvements in students' participation, classroom interaction, and learning as a result of the researchers' projects.

Data that documented this positive impact on student learning were collected via classroom observations and documentation of classroom activities, as well as student work samples and curriculum based assessments.

Specific changes noted in classroom practices by teachers participating in their own action research projects included looping up with students (one teacher moving up with her or his students up to the next grade level), heterogeneous (mixed ability) grouping of students across achievement levels, as well as the use of thematic curriculum, multicultural literature, and holistic assessment practices, all of which are also supported in the literature on culturally responsive teaching.

Although the Madison Metropolitan School District's grant-funded model of professional learning did not directly aim to address culturally responsive teaching, groups who participated in this project chose this goal as a result of the constructivist professional learning approach of assessing one's own needs, as informed by the needs of students (i.e., developing practice based on the performance of students). Several groups developed common interests in issues related to gender and racial equity, as well as inclusive education for students learning English and students with special needs during the 1995-96 school year, and designed and carried out classroom action research projects around these interests.

One such research project was concerned with the lack of assessment of students' learning, particularly students learning English who were also diagnosed with cognitive disabilities, and explored the role of portfolios in student assessment. Another study inquired into issues that arose from the implementation of an honor system designed to recognize student responsibility, and revealed inequities in student treatment within this system. Still another project examined culturally responsive teaching through the design and implementation of curricular units that connected with students' lives, and that valued students' lived

experiences as of central importance to learning. There was also research on the classroom action research groups themselves; a research study on one of these groups looked at teachers' assessment practices using interviews of the 12 participants of the gender and racial equity group, field notes from 10 group meetings, and examination of the published research studies for each group participant. Collected artifacts also included distributed handouts, and evaluation feedback completed by each participant at the end of each group meeting (Caro-Bruce & Zeichner, 1998).

Analysis of data revealed that as teachers collected data from their students, they became more learner-centered and developed higher expectations for what culturally and linguistically diverse students bring to school, know, and are able to accomplish. Teachers also reported commitment to democratic and interactive approaches in their classrooms, including the determination of curriculum and general classroom decision-making. This is linked to research on culturally responsive teaching related to the potential benefits in creating democratic classrooms for students who are culturally and linguistically diverse (Sorenson, 1996).

As a tool for learning, teacher inquiry holds great promise in offering teachers the opportunity to explore their own practice and look for ways to build bridges between the curriculum, the culture of schooling, and the lived experiences of their students. However, without an awareness and understanding of the confluence of these dimensions, teacher inquiry and other tools for learning may not be powerful enough to surface teachers' assumptions and perspectives on what is privileged and how they continue to reproduce those values in their classrooms.

Professional Learning Situated In Professional Communities: The Cheche Konnen Professional Learning Community Exemplar

Professional learning communities (PLCs) show promise as an evidence-based approach in which professional learning for teachers is situated. Although there are various definitions of PLCs, they are all centered around communities of teachers who work collaboratively to reflect on their practices, and on the relationship between their practice and student outcomes, as well as make changes to their teaching based on these reflections (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006).

The design of PLCs is informed by the research on adult learning (Bransford et al., 2000; Lieb, 1991; Zemke & Zemke, 1995). PLCs require the engineering of school cultures to create conditions, routines, and practices that place learning at the center of teachers' work (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2006). PLCs envision schools as learning environments for teachers and students, and thus, PLCs rely on a community-centered perspective to promote professional learning within which teachers are supported in sharing and building on each other's knowledge (Bransford et al., 2000).

A review of the research on teacher learning conducted by Wilson and Berne (1999) discusses how opportunities to talk about subject matter, about students and learning, and about teaching itself, affect teacher learning in positive ways. Professional learning strategies are co-constructed by participants in order to foster trust and collaboration within a community, and include participants' exposure to improvements in student work as evidence of positive impact on teacher and student learning (Hawley &Valli, 1999). Many PLCs models draw from

a social constructivist theory of teaching and learning which is supported by extensive research, including discussion by Banks et al. (2005) of studies of schools that include teachers involved in investigating particular issues or questions. Contemporary paradigms of professional learning reject the assumption that teachers are passive learners and that an outside "expert" should provide "training" or transmit information to practitioners (Sparks & Hirsch, 1997).

The Cheche Konnen Project ("search for knowledge" in Haitian Creole) in Cambridge, Massachusetts is an ongoing, job-embedded, collaborative approach to professional learning between the Teacher Education Resource Center (TERC), an math and science education research and development organization, and bilingual, English as a Second Language and science teachers. The goal of this collaboration is to create classroom communities that engage in scientific practice and improved science education for children "whose linguistic, intellectual and cultural strengths are not recognized as relevant to academic learning" (http://www.terc.edu/work/753.html). Within Cheche Konnen Project partnership districts, many students speak a first language other than English and are of African descent.

As teachers from the Cheche Konnen Project partnership districts worked with TERC, they participated in professional learning activities that were ongoing, and that evolved over time, which are essential qualities of effective professional learning (Wilson & Berne, 1999). Initially, the professional learning took place as a several-day summer workshop during which culturally relevant and responsive science curricula for students learning English and of African descent were introduced and practiced. However, outcome data

showed that once the school year began, the teachers did not enact the curriculum in the ways that the professional learning activities promoted. For this reason, Rosebury and colleagues (1998, a) adjusted to a professional learning approach that was ongoing and situated within the schools in which the culturally responsive curricula was to be implemented.

The following summer, Rosebury and colleagues met with teachers for two weeks, and then for two hours every other week after school throughout the school year. During these bi-weekly meetings the teachers engaged in culturally relevant scientific activities themselves, including formulating hypotheses, conducting experiments, and writing results, rather than being shown curriculum, and learned how to engage in a scientific discourse about issues that mattered in their own lives, while developing research questions and methods, and then socially constructing their understanding of their research topics and applying understanding to their everyday lives (Warren & Rosebery, 1995). By experiencing culturally relevant activities and the impact of these activities on their own learning, teachers were exposed to the importance and the power of culturally responsive approaches for their students.

The Cheche Konnen Project measured the success of the approach through changes in how teachers engaged in thinking scientifically, which was evidenced by more scientific discourse and deeper understanding of the subject matter they identified as relevant to investigate. Project impact was also examined with measures of student learning that resulted from engagement in inquiry on culturally

familiar and relevant topics through scientific research methods. Researchers showed that participating in this type of culturally-relevant, activity-based professional learning provided teachers with the opportunity to talk about and "do" subject matter that was important to them, and in turn, students' scientific discourse and thinking developed and they knew much more in-depth information about the topics they chose to study (Rosebery & Warren, 1998a, 1998b). For example, students chose to learn about the topic of sound waves through investigation of the building and playing of Haitian African-style drums. Many students were already familiar with these drums in the music played in their homes and in their native countries. Teachers built on students' prior knowledge about the drums to bridge their learning about the scientific concepts of sound; students analyzed sounds created by banging

drums they built themselves, using computer software designed for the study of sound. Students were able to explore differences in the appearance of sound waves dependent on pitch, and concepts of soft, loud, high, low, and other sound-related terms. For an in-depth description of how student learning is evidenced within this program, see Conant, Rosebery, Warren, & Hudicourt-Barnes (2001).

Professional learning situated in PLCs engages teachers in exploring their own curriculum through sharing and building on each other's knowledge and examining the effects of their teaching on student learning, which in turn, contributes to sustained changes in teachers' day-to-day practice that result in improvements in student outcomes.

Professional Learning Schools: The University Of Colorado At Denver/ Denver Professional Learning Schools Exemplar

Professional Learning Schools (most often called Professional Development Schools) are collaborative partnerships between colleges or universities and public schools that support professional learning for both pre-service and in-service educators. Professional Learning Schools (PLSs) are school settings where teacher candidates are provided with a professional induction, and current educators focus on the daily improvement of the skills, knowledge, and dispositions apparent in their pedagogy (Trachtman, 2007). Additionally PLSs provide sites for higher education faculty development and research carried out by educators and faculty. The goal of all of these efforts is for enhanced student learning outcomes (Goodlad, 1988). PLSs by design inherently incorporate The Equity Alliance at ASU's principles for professional learning when they engage in inquiry as a key

element of improvement processes (Elmore, 1996; Osguthorpe, Harris, Harris Fox, Black, 1995; Sarason, 1993). They promote collaborative inquiry into practice, and situate professional learning within the contexts of daily practice. However, although there have been mixed research evidence regarding the effectiveness of PLSs, Goodlad (1994) and Valli, Cooper, and Franks (1997) cite the necessity of readjusting teachers' time and resources for the effort and activity necessary for successful professional learning schools, rather than creating them as additive, and potentially overwhelming models for existing schools.

The University of Colorado at Denver Health Sciences Center (UCD) and several PLSs have worked collaboratively for 17 years to educate new teachers, and develop and improve exemplary practice to improve outcomes for all students, including those who are CLD. The key players in these processes are the clinical teachers who work directly with UCD teacher candidates in school internships, leadership area professors (UCD faculty), who work in the PLS one day a week to support professional learning, and the principals, Associate Dean of Teacher Education, and the Dean of the College of Education who meet monthly to discuss issues in need of attention and improvement and support the work of all educators at the PLSs, including UCD contract teachers, who are first year teachers who completed their internship at one of the PLSs.

In these partnerships, teachers, teacher candidates, and site professors work together on inquiry activities that led to the emergence of an essential feature of improving educational practices: communication. The partner schools reported that inquiry activities, co planning, advisory committees, co-teaching and social activities contributed to the development of community between

the partner school site and its University partner (Kozleski, Gamm, & Radner, 2003). These activities were in the form of developing partner school benchmarks for assessing teacher learning through student outcomes, regular meetings of partner school principals, Socratic seminars with educators and University faculty, centers for pedagogy where teaching was modeled, critiqued and reflected upon. Additionally, curricular innovations were initiated in some of the partner schools as a direct result of the partnership between the University and the PLS. For example, whole schools adopted a rubrics driven approach to student assessment that guided improvements in student work over time. Prior to this approach, teachers graded assignments without organizing individual tasks into sets of accomplishments linked to standards. Rubrics became a vehicle for teachers to look student work across classrooms to develop a shared standard for scoring work. This kind of public discussion about student work samples was also used to assess the progress of teacher candidates and ultimately, to assess teacher practice for end-of-year teacher evaluation.

Most importantly, the PLSs were chosen because they served students who were highly diverse. Clinical teachers worked with their teacher candidates to explore ways in which content knowledge was anchored in the community experiences of the students. Teacher candidates learned how to observe, understand, and negotiate behavior as well as approaches to learning that were outside their own experiences. Teacher candidates learned to explore identity, heritage, and privilege to build classroom cultures that spanned students' lives outside of school and informed the shape and nature of the school curriculum. Site professors worked with teacher candidates through their journals, challenging assumptions that teacher candidates

MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION
(BANKS & BANKS, 1995):

"**Multicultural education is a field of study and an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups.** *One of its important goals is to help students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic society and to interact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in order to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good." (p. xi)*

"**Multicultural education not only draws content, concepts, paradigms, and theories from specialized in•terdisciplinary fields such as ethnic studies, and women's studies (and from history and the social and behavioral sciences), it also interrogates, challenges, and reinterprets content, concepts, and paradigms from the established disciplines.** *Multicultural education applies content from these fields and disciplines to pedagogy and curriculum development in educational settings. Consequently, we may define multicul•tural education as a field of study designed to increase educational equity for all students that incorporates, for this purpose, content, concepts, principles, theories, and paradigms from history, the social and behavioral sciences, and particulary from ethnic studies and women's studies." (p. xii)*

made about families and students. These journal entries often formed the basis of ongoing inquiry activities or the legacy projects that teams of teacher candidates completed before leaving their schools at the end of the program. For example, one legacy project developed a map of neighborhood activities that occurred throughout the year so that teachers could anchor their curriculum in authentic experiences that students have in their own neighborhoods. Another legacy project involved developing a graded library of Spanish trade books for grades one through six.

This opportunity for a site for teacher learning was created by the context in which the teacher education program was located as well as by the skill with which the clinical teachers and the site professors were able to mediate teacher candidates' learning. Further, the relationship between clinical teachers and teacher candidates has become a major source of learning for teachers in practice as well as the teacher candidates. As a result of the sheer number of teacher candidates in buildings, teachers have become comfortable with sharing their practice dilemmas with one another and designing processes for collecting evidence about their own problems of practice.

Over the last 17 years, these PLSs have become embedded in the teacher education program and also in their school districts as sites for teacher learning. Numbers of teacher candidates have graduated from these schools and stayed on in the professional development schools or sought other urban teaching placements in the same district, increasing the number of skilled teachers working in highly complex, diverse schools. The PLSs themselves have continued to make annual yearly progress while schools around them have struggled. This approach to teacher learning is particularly tied to Professional Learning

Principles 4, 5, and 6, which describe professional learning as resulting in improved learning for students who have been marginalized in U.S. schooling, influencing decisions about what is taught and why, and focusing on the diffusion of educational knowledge for sustainable educational communities focused on improved student outcomes, respectively.

Content Knowledge That Leads To Content Specific Pedagogy: The Project CRISP Exemplar

An approach designed with specific attention to research on professional learning as related to content knowledge infused with culturally responsive pedagogy is Project CRISP (Culturally Responsive Instruction for Special Populations), a professional learning program designed and implemented in a large metropolitan school district (Voltz, Brazil, & Scott, 2003). The purpose of Project CRISP was to address the need for teacher awareness of how learning and behavior is mediated by culture, in order to reduce disproportionate representation of minority students in special education. Project CRISP linked teacher learning to culturally responsive pedagogy.

Project CRISP included participation of 33 teachers who were part of school-based teams consisting of at least two people with at least one special education teacher per team. There was participation from both elementary and middle school level teachers. The program followed Banks' (1989, 2001) conception of multicultural education, with the following dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, empowering school culture, and equity pedagogy. Project CRISP also exemplifies a commitment to creating space for the discussion of how culture mediates learning and behavior. Box 1 on the previous page defines the model

for multicultural education according to Banks and Banks (1995), and as used by Project CRISP.

Strands of content covering different subjects such as mathematics, science, and social studies were built in among the core content issues, pedagogy, and equity. Activities included a three-day seminar primarily for intro-

ducing knowledge of the multicultural education framework, exploring issues related to disability and cultural differences, and selection of goals for future learning that built upon the content from the seminar.

Specifically, the seminar consisted of guest speakers representing different content areas such as English as a Second Language (ESL), simulations of classroom situations with culturally diverse students, application of material with sample lesson plans, skits, and videos that demonstrated what they were teaching. Although the goal was to broaden teachers' conceptions of what it means to be culturally diverse and its impact on learning and behavior, it was also necessary to create more ownership by expanding on what cultural diversity means and how teaching is a cultural practice. Thus, teachers were encouraged to choose

their own goals as well as how they would pursue these goals in order to incorporate pedagogy in addition to subject area content. Teams of teachers chose areas of interest related to culturally responsive practices at the end of the 3-day seminar, which included learning about the cultural backgrounds of their students, and culturally responsive content, instructional materials, and assessment. The only other parameter was to choose only 1-2 goals per team, and then, plan and participate in collaborative professional learning activities that teams felt would be valuable in reaching these goals. These professional learning activities took place over several months after the initial 3-day seminar concluded for an average of 26 hours per teacher, and included reading groups on research and practice-based work around culturally responsive teaching, assessment and modification of instructional materials and curriculum in order to make it culturally responsive, and action research projects on diverse student outcomes. Pre- and post-Project CRISP interviews with teacher participants reflected improved confidence in teaching students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, as well as students with special needs. This professional learning approach best exemplifies Professional Learning Principles 1, 2, & 5, which focus on understanding contexts of diverse communities, joint, productive engage-

ment in dialogue based learning, and influencing what is taught and why.

Further, this exemplar demonstrates professional learning that addresses the arena of content specific knowledge, by offering the opportunity for teachers to practice specific strategies within their content expertise.

CONCLUSION

As these examples attest, professional learning approaches should be ongoing, job-embedded and informed by larger reform initiatives, as well as collaborative, constructivist, and inquiry based. Further, professional learning should be a public practice in which learning discourse, and honing new practices are made available for other teachers to understand and adopt for their own classrooms.

However, in order to support culturally responsive pedagogy and instruction, professional learning must also explicitly provide guided opportunities for teachers to examine their own culture, experiences, beliefs, and biases as related to their teaching of culturally and linguistically diverse students while engaging in doing and talking about subject matter. These four arenas (professional learning through teacher inquiry; professional learning situated in professional learning communities; professional learning schools; and content knowledge research that leads to content specific pedagogy) show great promise in developing teachers' capacities to deepen their funds of cultural knowledge and practice as a key facet of their continuing professional learning over time. The Equity Alliance at ASU's Professional Learning Principles provide guidelines for ensuring that professional learning affords educators' opportunities to explore personal and professional identities and respond to the strengths and needs that students of CLD backgrounds bring to class-

rooms. We hope that this Equity In Action will help you and your colleagues explore the dimensions of culturally responsive teacher learning and engage in long-term endeavors that transform your own teaching to benefit outcomes for All your students.

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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