

Luz de Cultura

Charter School Administrators Share Their Experience with Diversity

At the Charter Schools National Conference in Milwaukee, participants of the session *Serving Diverse Populations in Charter Schools* crowded into the conference room to hear working experience from the field. The panel included representatives from a collection of culturally diverse charter schools. Themes repeated during the session's discussion were recruiting, marketing the school, application of cultural competence within schools, absences, hands-on instruction and parent involvement. While most of the themes were not on diversity, the session revealed that the philosophy and values of a charter school merge with the practical matters of school management.

Mr. Richard Farias of the Tejano Center for Community Concerns, a non-profit organization in Houston, TX, serving a Latino population, described the comprehensive and holistic approach the Center practices with their programs. For example, they provide housing, a shelter, coordinate with Americorps for teacher aids, and facilitate an adult education program. At the TCCC's charter school, a staff member organizes parents to volunteer community hours at the school.

Mr. Farias outlined their approach at the TCCC including these "tips" for organizations providing services to a Latino population: 1) create an atmosphere of *La Familia*, 2) include a parent component, 3) include family literacy programs, 4) encourage teachers to go to homes of each child they teach 5) develop good self-esteem and self-confidence (he mentioned the challenge courses and adventure or R.O.P.E.S. curriculum—Refocus Opportunity Program of Education and

Service), 6) hire bilingual teachers 7) get involved in cultural events 8) incorporate cultural food in the cafeteria (like enchiladas) 9) always maintain and open-door policy.

Dr. Mark Sorenson, Principal of the Little Singer Community School, a primarily Navajo charter school, described their school's experience and success incorporating cultural awareness in the school by building compassion among students, getting students out in the community, and integrating traditional hands-on and oral experience into the classroom. He discussed how the school encourages and benefits from input by the parents about cultural awareness.

Similarly, Mr. Nakanishi from Hālua Kū Māna New Century Public Charter School in Hawaii explained the school's philosophy of promoting native Hawaiian integrity and tradition, incorporating more hands-on learning, thus affirming Dr. Sorenson's observations. Hālua Kū Māna employs a majority of Hawaiian teachers, and emphasizes the strength of the Hawaiian people. Mr. Nakanishi stressed the need for real-world curriculum: language, culture, values, and a sense of place, and he recommended viewing, *Pedagogy of Place: Little Singer Community School, Navajo Nation (2000)*, a video about Dr. Sorenson's school in Arizona.

Managing school recruiting and marketing was a pressing concern for the audience, and Mr. Dave DeBerry, Principal of the Milwaukee Urban League Academy of Business and Economics, re-

(Continued on page 4)

Inside this issue:

Book and Article
Reviews 2

New Web Sites 2

Interview—Dr.
Mark Sorenson 3

Charter School
Conference Info. 3

Demographic
Chart of Students 4

Pepe Barrón, Ph.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Luz Academy of Tucson
and Adalberto M. Guerrero
School

Ricardo Jasso, M.Ed.
Executive Director,
Luz Social Services, Inc.

Bob Granado, M.Ed.
Principal, Luz Academy of
Tucson

Anna Burke
Director, Center for Cultural
Competence

Robin Southern
Media Specialist

Website:
[www.luzsocialservices.org/
ccc/index.html](http://www.luzsocialservices.org/ccc/index.html)

Email:
ccc@luzsocialservices.org

Books and Articles Covering Stereotype Threat and Diverse Classrooms

Newly Discovered Websites of Interest!

Books:

California School of Professional Psychology Handbook of Multicultural Education, Research, Intervention, and Training, Elizabeth Davis-Russell. ISBN: 0-7879-5763-1, 2002

From the prestigious California School of Professional Psychology comes a definitive and indispensable resource. Drawing on the most current research and practice in the field, *The Handbook of Multicultural Education, Research, Intervention, and Training* is a comprehensive volume that addresses critical issues such as culturally responsive education, culturally infused clinical training, culturally competent faculty, qualitative research in multicultural studies, working with culture in psychotherapy, racial-identity attitudes, conceptualizing wellness in multicultural populations, and many other key topics in the on-going effort to create educational, social service, and mental health systems which truly reflect our society. Of special interest to educators is Ch. 3, *The Vicissitudes of Cultural Competence: Dealing with Difficult Classroom Dialogue*, by Gale Young and Elizabeth Davis-Russell. The article recommends step-by-step practices for educators dealing with difficult conversations and students' emotions in the classroom.

Crossing Over to Canaan: The Journey of New Teachers in Diverse Classrooms, Gloria Ladson-Billings, <http://www.wiley.com/cda/product/0..0787950017.00.html>
ISBN: 0-7879-5001-7

From the Inside Flap: *Crossing Over to Canaan* tells the story of eight novice teachers working in urban, elementary school settings. It details their struggles and triumphs as they confront challenges in the classroom and respond with innovative strategies that turn cultural strengths into academic assets. Gloria Ladson-Billings offers a model of teaching that focuses on academic achievement, cultural competence, and socio-political consciousness. Drawing from her own experiences as a young African-American teacher working in Philadelphia, she successfully weaves together narrative, observation, and scholarship to create an inspirational and practical book that will help teachers everywhere as they work to transcend labels and categories to support excellence among all students.

Articles:

"Thin Ice: 'Stereotype Threat' and Black College Students," by Claude M. Steele, *The Atlantic Monthly*

<http://www.theatlantic.com/issues/99aug/9908stereotype.htm#bio>

Stereotype threat is "the threat of being viewed through the lens of a negative stereotype, or the fear of doing something that would inadvertently confirm that stereotype," such as the stereotype that women perform poorly in math. Steele explains that some students try to escape stereotype threat by disidentifying with the part of life in which the stereotype originates, such as race or ethnic identities. The article defines what an academic community can do to reduce or completely eliminate stereotype threat - increase the degree of racial trust, or the assurance of racial fairness in assessment.

Preparing Teachers for Multicultural Classrooms, by Ines Marquez Chisholm
<http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/miscpubs/jeilms/vol14/chisholm.htm>

Despite much rhetoric and research, a fundamental question in preservice teacher education continues to elicit much debate: What do teacher candidates need to become effective teachers? The answer to this basic question is as varied as the myriad of philosophical and epistemological perspectives that span the history of pedagogy. Although there may be no definitive answer to this fundamental question, just as there is no one best teaching model or one kind of student, there is a professional area of knowledge and skill that should permeate all preservice education programs--multicultural education. This field which prepares teachers "for the social, political and economic realities that individuals experience in culturally diverse and complex human encounters" is as essential to teaching as nurturing is to human development.

The Center for Cultural Fluency
<http://www.culturalfluency.org>

The Center for Cultural Fluency was created to provide classroom resources and professional development for teachers about issues of cultural diversity. In particular, our aim is to enable teachers to become culturally fluent and to develop cultural fluency in their students. The Center for Cultural Fluency has developed a collection of essential, compelling resources for educators everywhere who wish to add multicultural perspectives to their curriculum. The website includes and excellent vendors section for purchasing videos, books, posters, art, and other multicultural education materials.

Rethinking Schools Online,
<http://www.rethinkingschools.org/index.html>.

Rethinking Schools began as a local effort to address problems such as basal readers, standardized testing, and textbook-dominated curriculum. It remains firmly committed to equity and to the vision that public education is central to the creation of a humane, caring, multiracial democracy. While writing for a broad audience, Rethinking Schools emphasizes problems facing urban schools, particularly issues of race.



"Academic gap: Progress this time? Seattle educators differ on schools' new try for equity"

The Seattle Times

http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/localnews/134522008_equity26m.html

This article describes Seattle working to make schools more integrated. Outcomes show all minorities scoring low in math, and reading, and inequities in advanced placement and gifted programs. The article reports on the view held by educators that promoting equity in schools is dependent on commitment by the district's leadership. Recommendations from the report of Seattle's "disproportionality action committee" called for recruitment of an ethnically diverse work force, elimination of racial disparities in assigning students to special education and gifted programs, and **training teachers to work with children of different backgrounds**. The article also reports on the failed equity attempts by previous task forces - they failed by not decreasing the education performance gap.

Culture and Community: Why We Should Honor Both - Interview

Dr. Mark Sorenson is the Executive Director of The Little Singer Community School, and School Director of The Star School, and Project Director of the Native Science Connections Project. The Little Singer Community School is in the community of Birdsprings in the southwest corner of the Navajo Nation, Arizona. Dr. Sorenson answered questions from our email questions.

What are some of the greatest challenges that face K-12 educators who are integrating cultural competence into their curriculum, and what advice would you give them?

This question could take days to answer fully. To make a very brief response, I would say that we must start with the deep belief that we are all related, no matter how different we may act, and at the same time we must recognize that each culture has survived to this day because it has great strength built within it and we must do what we can to discover that strength that we know is there. If we don't see it it's just because we have not looked in the right direction or asked the right questions. Once we get our beliefs going in a useful direction, then the information we get from the students, their parents and other sources will align itself in our thinking and will give educators an understanding that is authentic and can be felt as such by the members of whatever culture we are describing.

While implementing cultural competence strategies which ones have proven to be the most effective? Why?

For Native American communities where I work, the most effective strategies are those that have gotten educators out into the community, especially for ceremonies, but this requires a good intent to learn and respect the culture on the part of the educator.

Has there been anything that has been difficult to implement? Why?

White educators sometimes have difficulty seeing themselves as part of the rainbow of races. On the other hand, in America, we have often confused race with culture. It has been difficult to get people to recognize the value of their own culture and other cultures without denial or shame. Either response I believe is an overreaction. We must recognize what our own culture has done good and bad, as well as what other cultures have done, good and bad.

What kind of network do charter schools have to access resources? How culturally competent do you feel these resources are?

I have formed an alliance of Native American charter schools and we are working with Native Hawaiian charter schools through a dissemination grant. The federal government has been more helpful by far than the states on recognizing our remoteness and need. We have realized that our own focus on native knowledge of the natural world is our strength to share.

For questions about this interview, you may contact Dr. Sorenson at mark@tn.org

National Charter Schools Clearinghouse National Conference in Scottsdale, Arizona, September 12—15, 2002

For more information call 623-846-2530, or email fir@aibt.edu

Website:

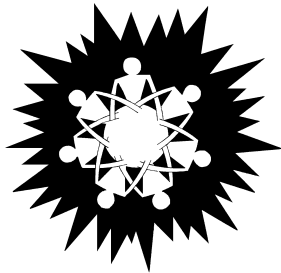
[Http://http://www.ncsc.info/cgi-bin/link/first.asp](http://http://www.ncsc.info/cgi-bin/link/first.asp)

Center for Cultural Competence,
a program of Luz Academy and
Luz Social Services, Inc.

2797 N. Introspect Dr.
Tucson, AZ 85745

Phone: 520-882-6212
Fax: 520-623-9291
Email: luz@luzsocialservices.org

We're on the web!
[www.luzsocialservices.org/ccc/
index.html](http://www.luzsocialservices.org/ccc/index.html)



(Continued from page 1)

sponded to the issue. He underscored his success in recruiting African American parents using an intimate one-on-one approach. He explained how he frequents outdoor festivals and visits homes door-to-door to speak to potential parents. Communicating directly with parents was part of another popular theme of the session - encouraging parents' involvement in the school. Mr. DeBerry said the school develops programs for "effective Black parenting", incorporating parenting success; similar to what Mr. Farias did with his program in Texas.

Overall, the session provided solid examples of how culture is important, and what role it can play in the success of a school's mission. Each panelist provided first-hand accounts of how they met specific challenges to the school's success by managing recruitment and marketing along with maintaining a philosophy of valuing culture.

For more information on how to contact panelists described in this article, please contact Robin Southern at rsouthern@luzsocialservices.org or (520.882.6216).

