

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

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# Luz de Cultura

## TUSD Trains Master Teachers for Raza Studies to Create Culturally Competent Curriculum and Faculty

Augustine Romero, Director, TUSD Mexican American/Raza Studies

The Tucson Unified School District's Raza Studies Department has committed itself to the creation and implementation of curriculum that follows the premises within two major theories: theory of culture and cognitive development, and schema theory. The focus of both theories is on education within the ecological niche of the student. Research by the University of Arizona's Luis Moll has demonstrated that a focus upon a student's ecological niche has led to a deeper, more meaningful, and more effective educational experience. In its continued efforts to provide such educational experiences, the Raza Studies Department has called upon the Hispanic Education and Media Group to further train Tucson educators in the areas of curriculum development and Latino relevant pedagogy.

*Cada Cabeza Es Un Mundo* is a comprehensive Latino-centric guide to pedagogy produced by the Hispanic Education and Media Group. The curriculum affirms the theoretical framework adopted by the Raza Studies Department (mentioned above) and emphasizes the history, culture and the lives of Latino students. The mission of this partnership between the Hispanic Education and Media Group and the Raza Studies Department at TUSD is to address and overcome the issues that prevent Latino-Chicano school children from becoming academically proficient.

The Department has created a cohort of master teachers who are trained to implement the curriculum and educate their respective faculties in using the curriculum and pedagogy. For some this is a shift in paradigm and pedagogy, however, we believe that the old way of teaching has and will fail our young. Therefore, a shift must occur and it must occur immediately. We are losing our youth and our future every minute of every day. We must act today because there is no tomorrow. Our next *Cada Cabeza* session will be held on February 1<sup>st</sup> from 9:00 am – 2:30 pm. If you have any questions call 225-6258.

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## Update on Cultural Competence Resources

### Websites:

#### International Children's Digital Library

A new project has developed a sweeping digital archive of books from around the world for children ages 3 to 13. Now available online is the largest international collection of children's literature--over 200 books from 27 cultures in 15 languages. The vision is to eventually have 10,000 books from more than 100 countries.

The National Science Foundation recently awarded a five-year research grant to fund the project, the largest technology grant the NSF has awarded to a project for children.

The Internet Archive and the University of Maryland's Human-Computer Interaction Lab built the collection to reflect the diversity and quality of children's literature. Jane White is the project's director. "There are places in outer Mongolia where you will see a computer connected to the Internet faster than you will ever see a great library or a great bookstore," she says.

The site is innovative in its search methods. Extensive research with children helped programmers design a visual interface that allows children to search by how stories make them feel; by country or setting; by color, shape, or format; by genre; by language; or by fiction vs. nonfiction (true or make-believe). Children can also choose how they wish to view a book.

<http://www.icdlbooks.org/>

#### California Tomorrow

Over the past 15 years, California Tomorrow has built a strong body of research and a national reputation for facilitating institutional change processes and the challenging dialogue such change demands about intergroup relations, institutional oppression, equity and access. California Tomorrow works with schools, family-serving institutions, early childhood programs and communities to respond positively and equitably to diverse populations. We identify and design new models of practice for a diverse society -- and guide and support the work required to implement these models.

We bring the learning of this work to a wide variety of audiences through our high-quality publications, long-term partnerships, presentations and technical assistance.

#### Newest Publications:

- *So They May Speak...An Agenda for Language and Culture Centered School Reform*
- *Our Roots, Our Future: Affirming Culture and Language in After School and Youth Programs*

<http://www.californiatomorrow.org>

## CCC Advisory Group Bio's

### Dolores Carrion

*Education:* Bachelor of Fine Arts - major in Studio Arts; Masters in Art Education  
*Teaching History:* With 25 years experience, Ms. Carrion currently teaches Visual Arts at Pueblo High School with a multi-cultural focus.

### Manuel Medina

*Education:* Masters in Social Work; Ph.D. from Arizona State University; Dissertation, "*Client Variables and Patterns of Admissions to a County Psychiatric Facility.*" Currently enrolled in the Masters in Educational Technology program at Northern Arizona University.

*Profession:* Director of Planning and Quality Improvement for Arizona Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Program.

### Augustine Romero

*Education:* Bachelor of Political Science; Masters of Education in Language, Reading and Culture; Currently a Ph.D. student in Language, Reading and Culture

*Profession:* Mr. Romero has been teaching for 7 years. Currently he is Director of Tucson Unified School District Mexican American/ Raza Studies.

### Anna Sanchez

*Education:* Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education; Masters in Library Science

*Profession:* Ms. Sanchez has 15 years experience as a Librarian and currently works as Senior Librarian, Adult/Young Adult Services Department at Tucson-Pima Public Library.

### Ralph Varela

*Education:* Masters in Social Work

*Profession:* Mr. Varela is the Chief Executive Officer for Pinal Hispanic Council. Prevention and treatment within the Hispanic Community is the focus of the PHC . Mr. Varela also serves as the Vice-Chairman of the Arizona State Liquor Board.



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## Educating for Two Worlds

*(Interview with Allison Reeves, Director of Ha:sañ Preparatory and Leadership School, Tucson, Arizona.  
Interview is published as written by the interviewee)*

### **1. In literature related to cultural diversity, the term “cultural competence” is often used. How would you define ‘cultural competence’?**

In the most simple way, it is for developing your identity through understanding who you are. I think that it is deeply connected to learning how to speak and write ones language, but also includes an understanding of one’s personal cultural history and the ability to see how this fits in with the rest of the world. It is also an action, the act of being in and participating in one’s culture. We promote a bicultural curriculum, one that focuses on cultural competence in one’s own culture but also seeks to provide exposure and competence to the mainstream culture. We try to do this in a way that raises students consciousness about both of these worlds. We talk to them about the need to wear two hats. We do not try and get them to turn in their “rez” hat when they develop skills needed to survive and thrive in the dominant culture. It is a reality of modern life that to thrive they will need to understand both worlds. We want to help students do this with a critical understanding of history which can inform and support their future.

### **2. What is your vision of what cultural competence can do for U.S. students?**

Research for Native American students shows that it is key to their achievement, their ultimate success, and the success of their communities. That I suppose is the tip of the iceberg as we feel as a school that it can also promote strong sovereign communities for Native Americans and that this is key to survival. The students we serve come from communities which are challenged by hundreds of years of disruptions from outside forces. I think that a strong sense of cultural identity can be the first step towards healing the community. This is necessary for not simply survival but moving beyond that to strong healthy communities. For a long time the Federal Government tried to erase cultural differences by mainstreaming Native American’s into the dominant culture through education. Rather than promoting cultural competence, there was out and out cultural genocide going on through schooling. This was incredibly damaging to Native American people. Hundreds if not thousands of distinct tribes managed to survive this period with their languages and cultures intact. In this story, we see our school working to heal this for local tribal communities by overtly focusing on “cultural competence”, to help students rediscover what has been hidden and taken away, and to teach them to draw on these things for strength and making meaning of the world around them.

### **3. 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?**

I think that a lot of times each culture is given only a moment of attention in the classroom and that this is not enough. Regular diverse public schools have a lot of different cultures within their school. I think that this forces a focus on the dominant culture as a common culture unless the school works very hard to do something else. This focus has the inevitable result of making those from diverse cultures feel that something is wrong with them.

There are also many pressures, pressures from accountability and testing programs, the mainstream media, television. Testing programs force the focus onto a limited scope of learning, this can make it difficult to find time to create meaningful amounts of time for learning language history and culture that is not going to be on the test (and for certain, it won’t be on the test).

Mainstream media strives hard to create a common consumer culture that is devoid of distinct cultural identities. Music by Native Americans is not on the best seller list so our students rarely see their culture reflected on radio stations or MTV. Movies about Native Americans are rare and when they are produced they tend to tell a story that is palatable to the average American. These images do not reflect a healthy sense of identity and community which our students can relate to.

There are dozens of challenges, I think these are the most prevalent.

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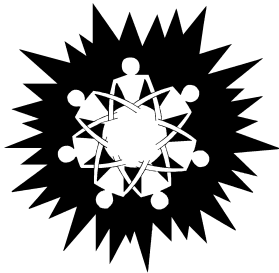
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index.html](http://www.luzsocialservices.org/ccc/index.html)



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

There are a lot of resources available to charter school people. They are mostly accessed through the state and federal government, professional organizations and personal networking. However, I would say that there is no “cultural competency focus” to any of these resources. We do not only rely on the typical resources such as the state or federal government, instead we look to the community from which are students come. It is rich with resources. We have worked with the various departments on the Tohono O’odham Nation and this has provided rich support for our programs and students. We are beginning to work with the Pasqua Yaqui Nation as our enrollment from that community grows. We also work with the U of A to provide access to Native student programs and organizations for our students. We also move beyond institutions, whether they are Native or not and reach out to individuals in the community. We

also try to set up programs that allow reciprocation between our school and the community in terms of resources. For instance, our Wellness program works to help provide diabetes prevention by going to various elderly centers, cooking traditional foods, and teaching about native plants and foods. We also helped to set up and maintain a traditional foods garden in San Xavier. I think the community is the most culturally competent resource. Other organizations can help charter schools provide culturally competent programming by providing funding and support for us to work with the student’s communities at various levels.

*For more information or questions about content, please contact Robin Southern at [rsouthern@luzsocialservices.org](mailto:rsouthern@luzsocialservices.org) or (520) 882-6216.*

*Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not reflect those of the Luz Academy of Tucson, the Center for Cultural Competence or Luz Social Services, Inc.*