

# Culture, Language, and Student Achievement:

Recruiting and Preparing Teachers for Diverse Students



PROCEEDINGS FROM THE 2003 WINGSPREAD CONFERENCE



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RACINE, WISCONSIN

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The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education is a national, voluntary association of colleges and universities with undergraduate or graduate programs to prepare professional educators. The Association supports programs in data gathering, equity, leadership development, networking, policy analysis, professional issues, and scholarship.

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AACTE is publishing this document to stimulate discussion, study, and experimentation among educators, policy makers, and others interested in the education of culturally and linguistically diverse children.

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# INTRODUCTION

The nation's culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) classrooms face a critical shortage of high-quality teachers. Representatives from dozens of major national educational associations and institutions convened September 24-26, 2003, at the Wingspread Conference Center in Racine, Wisconsin, to grapple with this issue. The conference marked the 17th anniversary of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education's (AACTE) Wingspread conference on minority teacher recruitment and retention, which notably shaped the public's dialogue regarding the character and composition of the nation's teaching force. Since the 1987 gathering, rapid demographic changes in the PK-12 student population as well as the widening achievement gap between White students and students of other racial/ethnic and linguistic backgrounds make the need for a multicultural teaching force even more urgent than in the past. The 2003 Wingspread conference reexamined these issues in light of 21st century realities. In technological terms, the forum was in "real time." Comments were focused on what is happening now-in real time-with relevance for today's teachers, today's teacher educators, and most importantly for today's children.

The conference dialogue was rich, resulting in findings and recommendations for the education community, its stakeholders, and policy makers. Aiming to enhance the understanding of both the increasing challenges and the opportunities in culturally and linguistically diverse PK-



12 classrooms, and to put forward logical approaches to effective practice, conference participants developed recommendations to support two goals:

- the diversification of the teaching force; and
- professional development for all practicing and prospective teachers and administrators to increase their knowledge, skills, and dispositions enabling them to work successfully with all students, regardless of their background.

The American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education is committed to making these goals a reality.

# BACKGROUND

The 1987 AACTE-Wingspread conference resulted in a policy statement, *Minority Teacher Recruitment And Retention: A Public Policy Issue*, crafted and adopted by 12 organizations. More than 1,000 copies of the statement were distributed to educators, policymakers, community leaders, and the public. The notion of culturally responsive teaching practice was advanced. In the years that followed, the policy statement's recommendations were used to help craft state and local legislation and policies. The 1987 Wingspread conference as well as several follow-up conferences and studies emphasized both the need to increase the number of teachers from the different minority groups, and to prepare all teachers to work with culturally and linguistically diverse children (AACTE, 1987, 1990). To answer this call, significant public and private efforts to increase the number of minority teachers were established. Philanthropic organizations, including the Ford Foundation, DeWitt Wallace Reader's Digest Fund (now Wallace Foundation), and the BellSouth Foundation, invested over \$100 million in programs designed to increase the number of African American, Hispanic, Asian-Pacific, and Native American teachers practicing in K-12 schools. The Holmes Group (now Holmes Partnership) established the Holmes Scholars Program, designed to support and encourage graduate students of color to secure positions in schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDE). Recruiting Young Teachers (now Recruiting New Teachers)

evolved into a valuable resource for employment information for school districts and all teachers. Future Teachers Clubs (now Future Educators of America) proliferated. Magnet teaching specialty high schools situated in dozens of urban school districts were created. While these efforts yielded significant results, they did not completely meet the need for diversity within the teaching profession. Additionally, many of these programs have moderated their efforts or refocused their work on other issues.

In the past 15 years, the composition of the U.S. school-age population has changed dramatically. Minority groups account for almost 40% of students enrolled in elementary and secondary public schools (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002). Due to immigration and migration trends in the last decade, 20% of the school-age student population today comes from homes in which a language other than English is spoken. Increases in the limited English proficient (LEP) student population have exceeded 105% across the nation, and close to 200% in many states (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2002). During this same period, the general school population has grown only 12%. U.S. Census Bureau projections indicate that LEP children will constitute an estimated 40% of the K-12 age population by 2030. The raising enrollment of minority and LEP students poses a great strain on teachers and schools. Many schools are ill prepared to meet this

challenge, yet by and large held accountable for the students' academic success. Currently, 43% of our nation's teachers have at least one LEP student enrolled in their classroom (Zehler, Fleischman, Hopstock, Stephenson, Pendzick, & Sapru, 2003).

An increasing body of evidence shows that teachers with similar racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds to their students have a positive impact on student academic achievement. A recent large-scale study (Clewell, Puma, & McKay, 2001) shows that for Hispanic and Black students (particularly for Hispanic) having a teacher of the same race or ethnicity results in increased test score gains in reading and mathematics. Other studies show that at urban schools with larger numbers of minority teachers, minority students are more likely to graduate and pursue a college education (Hess & Leal, 1997). The mere presence of a teacher from the same racial/ethnic group improves students' motivations to succeed (Meier & Stuart, 1991).

Yet the nation's teacher workforce is still not representative of the student population in K-12 schools, despite the efforts to diversify the teacher workforce initiated in the 1980s. The supply of teachers representing culturally and linguistically diverse children's racial/ethnic backgrounds is still insufficient. In addition, few White teachers are adequately prepared to teach CLD students (Aronson & George, 2003). According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 2000, 84 % of elementary and secondary teachers in public schools were White, only 7% were African American, 6% Hispanic, and less than 3% were from other minority groups (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2003). At the same time, the achievement gap between White students and students of color continues to grow.



The drop-out rates of African Americans (13%) and Hispanics (35.5%) are still higher than of Whites (7%), with greater drop-out rates for Hispanic immigrants (44%) (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

The professional preparation of teachers is an expanding sector. As noted in a 2002 AACTE-hosted Wingspread conference, community colleges are an important partner in the effort to diversify the teaching force. Community colleges tend to enroll a more diverse population than do 4-year institutions. Recent federal policy promotes the preparation of new teachers through alternate routes to expeditiously address the teacher shortage, particularly in low-income and inner city areas. Community colleges, 4-year institutions, and policy makers need to be brought together to study ways to enhance efforts to recruit minority students into teaching careers, to prepare all teachers to teach diverse children, to assure the high quality of all teachers, and to assure the retention of these teachers.

# THE DIALOGUE: WING

*We need not be afraid of the diversity, yet we are more scared now than in the past, more suspicious, less trusting.*

— ANA MARIA SCHUHMAN, KEAN UNIVERSITY

*We live with agreed-upon positive stereotypes of the White middle-class culture: industrious, hardworking, family oriented, high academic achievers, and so on. What is needed within such a context is a better understanding of cultural diversity and ways to understand and celebrate the contributions of all Americans. It's important to know where the rest of us fit in.*

— MILDRED HUDSON, RECRUITING NEW TEACHERS

*We have done something right with “No Child Left Behind.” The nation is confronted with the reality that every child must be attended to by a highly qualified teacher.*

— DAVID G. IMIG, AACTE

*We need to get the school ready for the children rather than getting the children ready for school.*

— MARIA ESTELA BRISK, BOSTON COLLEGE

*The faculty are not ready; the teachers are not ready. So how can the students be ready?*

— EILEEN WALDSCHMIDT, OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

# SPREAD 2003

Participants commented that teachers of color, who are most likely to have the answers to closing the achievement gap between White, English-speaking youngsters and others, continue to be disenfranchised. The knowledge of what works and what does not is available. “Researchers should look to identify the characteristics of these teachers that make them successful,” said Beatriz Chu Clewell of the Urban Institute, and coauthor of a large-scale study on teacher background and student achievement (Clewell, Puma, & McKay, 2001). “We have a good sense of where effective teachers are and what excellent teaching looks like for all students,” said Ana Maria Schuhmann, dean of education at Kean University (NJ) and chair of AACTE’s Board of Directors. “Unfortunately, many federal, state, and local policies seem to send mixed messages by diminishing the importance of cultural and linguistic themes in training and welcoming underprepared individuals who take responsibility for teaching without adequate preparation, support, and resources.”

Traditional, as well as alternative teacher preparation programs have to make great adjustments to accommodate those who have the desire to teach the underserved well. The need for adjustment was brought into perspective with the comment of a Midwestern teacher education student who asked the group to “hurry up” and figure this out. She remarked that she and her senior-year classmates, beginning their careers in the fall, are apprehensive about



connecting what they have learned in their education program with their students. She continued by commenting that in her experience, the cooperating teachers, charged with guiding them through the practice of teaching and learning, have given up and openly admit to defeat in educating youngsters from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

# FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

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## Recruitment & Retention

### What Is Known

- Despite millions of philanthropic and public dollars dedicated to the recruitment and retention of teachers of color in the 1990s, a pipeline issue persists for prospective educators from these groups. Far too many potential teachers of color fail to finish high school, pursue and/or complete college and secure a license to teach.
- A number of challenges keep teacher candidates from under-represented populations from attending university based education schools. For example, many potential candidates from these groups are heads of households and must work to provide for themselves and their families making it challenging to also attend the program (Waldschmidt, 2002). Universities do not typically provide students with essential benefits such as medical insurance. Student teaching requirements conflict with the typical workday. In some regions, preparation programs are not easily accessible.
- User friendly teacher education degree programs exist. Too many of them, particularly those targeted at culturally and linguistically underrepresented adults, do not support their participants sufficiently and are poorly designed.

Many participants fall by the wayside; while others, in the face of extreme sacrifice, take an inordinate amount of time to complete such programs.

### What Needs to be Done

- Utilize existing research and program documentation to revisit, and reestablish programs designed to encourage diverse populations into the profession, early in their careers.
- Provide public policy and private incentives for colleges and universities to bring more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students into the education profession.
- Provide equitable and adequate funding to all public school systems in order to make teaching a more desirable profession in all districts.
- Establish teaching fellow programs for promising high-school students (e.g. those currently engaged in successful tutoring) to expose them to the field early. Make experience in such a program qualify for college credit.
- Identify barriers for prospective teachers of color to obtain licensure and develop programs to help them overcome these barriers.
- Establish reasonable and coherent data collection systems to provide a clear picture of the conditions, needs and

## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

progress of providing quality teacher education to all prospective educators.

- Conduct research on the validity of different methods of assessing teacher quality.
- Conduct research on alternate ways of demonstrating teaching skills, knowledge, and dispositions.
- Research and develop multiple pathways and assessments for prospective teachers to meet quality teaching and licensure requirements.
- Conduct additional research on why teachers leave the profession. Disaggregate results based on their years of preparation, quality of preparation, ethnicity of teacher, demographics of students taught, cost of living shortfalls, and other factors that address turnover issues.
- Assess the attitudes of college and high school students regarding the teaching profession and how it compares with their own career goals.

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### Teaching & Learning

#### What is Known

- Too many prospective teachers enrolled in schools, colleges, and departments of education and other licensing programs lack confidence in their ability to teach students from diverse backgrounds.
- Research shows that teachers of color, Hispanic and African American specifically, have a more positive impact



on students from their own groups than White teachers. Yet, for the most part, the education and policymaking community has not focused sufficiently on the need for quality training and licensure paths for these groups.

- Paraeducators and teacher aides are often the primary instructors in classrooms populated by students with languages other than English. They are rarely offered the opportunity to pursue a teaching license and as a result never have the opportunity to become teachers or to contribute formally to the improvement of teaching practice.
- Many students from culturally marginalized groups speak English. Absent the challenge of verbal communication, many educators' disregard the important role home and community play in the students' academic achievement.
- Colleges, universities, and school systems are often remiss in assigning prospective and new teachers to culturally and linguistically challenging classrooms without

## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

seasoned teachers and administrators to support them.

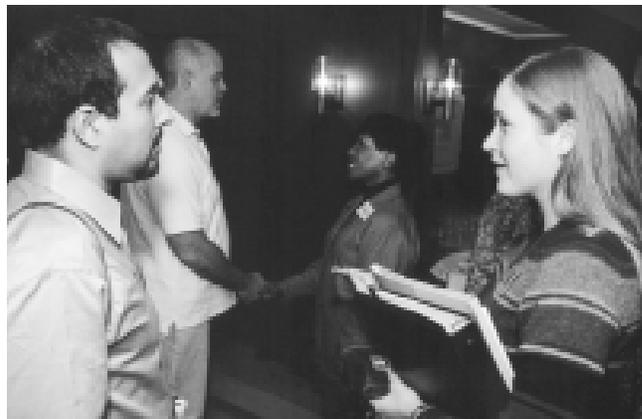
- Little symmetry exists between teachers' cultural and linguistic experiences and those of the students they are charged to teach. Mentor teachers, considered expert teachers, often have a firm grasp of content knowledge but lack the pedagogical context and technique to teach a diverse group of youngsters.
- The research base on culturally and linguistically responsive practice can be promoted and used to accomplish the goal of greater student achievement.

### What Needs to Be Done

- Design teacher preparation programs that effectively prepare all teachers to work with CLD students.
- Design teacher preparation programs that are clearly tailored for underrepresented and nontraditional students in curriculum, schedule, faculty and staff assignment.
- Schools, colleges, and departments of education should continually adhere to state, program and subject matter standards as they relate to matters of diversity rather than only complying during times of review.
- Encourage and support the continued commitment to the recruitment of diverse teacher education faculty and students.
- Examine and revise professional education curriculum to incorporate richer pedagogy and content regarding linguistic and cultural diversity
- Create field based, professional development programs for teacher education and arts and sciences faculty to

enhance their knowledge and understanding of teaching in diverse classrooms.

- Establish partnership programs of local school systems, practitioners (including those from target populations), community colleges, and 4-year colleges and universities designed to enhance the initial and continuing cultural and linguistic learning experiences of all teachers.
- Create summer academies on community college campuses for disadvantaged students-use the academies to provide more opportunities for teacher training. (Teachers involved in the summer academies could be drawn from a core of teachers living in other states or regions.)
- Provide more opportunities for on-line preservice teacher preparation and in-service teacher professional development training.
- Create a career-based 2+2(+2) program that will allow high school students to begin exposure to the teaching



# FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS



career in 11th & 12th grades while gaining credit for an associate degree.

- Adjust the SCDE faculty reward structure so that teaching teachers is as important as studying educational challenges.
- Equip teachers with research skills and resources that will allow them to relate their teaching to the communities from which their students come.

- Encourage researchers to focus on teacher practices and behaviors that positively affect learning of students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
- Conduct research on the pedagogies employed in effective teacher professional development that support the learning of CLD pupils as well as that of their peers.
- Conduct research on the types of student socio-linguistic behavior and levels of language command that leads to improved academic achievement.
- Create better bridges between research and practice in schools and classrooms.

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## Policy

### What is Known

- Some school systems hide their academic failure by denying their underachieving students entry into critical grades for high stakes tests or by placing them in special education classrooms where they are extremely limited in what they can learn. Students from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds are overly represented in these situations.
- Translating the complex web of state, national, and disciplinary standards for PK-12 student achievement into practice is challenging and time consuming for teachers and administrators.
- State education boards and commissions often fail to include both the perspectives of diverse communities and

## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

of the teacher preparation community in the development of standards and requirements for teacher licensure and program approval.

- There is a lack of effective communication between community colleges and 4-year institutions that leads to the lack of understanding between their two worlds. Community college faculty and administrators and those at 4-year institutions often fail to communicate effectively stifling program development and teacher production.
- Teacher unions are often perceived as working against school reform and thus improved student achievement. Contributing to this perception are contract agreements that accommodate teacher tenure through seniority, and union resistance to differentiated salary scales that impedes assignment of high performing teachers to low-performing schools.
- Policy, practice and tradition exclude paraeducators and teacher aides from contributing key knowledge and perspectives to state, local, and disciplinary standard setting bodies
- Focusing on supply and demand issues, a number of alternative route programs have been designed to yield large numbers of teachers in little time. A teacher participating in the forum coined the phrase “microwave” teachers. One of the most frequently touted merits of these programs is the number of people of color who are enrolled in them.

### What Needs to be Done

- Tie the essential components of teacher education curriculum with respect to cultural and linguistic diversity to state and federal legislative mandates for highly



qualified teachers.

- Authorize and encourage community colleges to offer teacher preparation associate degree programs that articulate with schools, colleges, and departments of education.
- Authorize community colleges to offer professional development that contributes to preparing in-service teachers to meet the higher quality standards.

## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- Foster and fund community collaborations among parents, public schools, community organizations, community colleges, and 4-year institutions to increase and enhance the preparation of culturally and linguistically diverse teachers.
- Encourage states to include culturally and linguistically responsive standards for students and teachers. Include representatives of the groups being served in the development of these standards.
- Assign more authority to principals and PK-12 administrators to employ staff, design culturally responsive curriculum, re-allocate teaching time, engage committees, and take other steps to promote school-wide success.
- Submit applications to federal education program com-



petitions that specify interest in enhancing teaching and learning for “all children.” Formally comment on programs that do not.

- Identify the role that teacher unions play in the certification process. Explore how to partner with unions to achieve the goals stated in this report.
- Conduct a survey identifying the number of varying initiatives and mandates affecting what teachers teach and how they teach it (e.g. No Child Left Behind).
- Establish reasonable and coherent data collection systems that will provide a clear picture of the conditions, needs, and progress of providing quality teaching to all students. More data needs to be collected on academic achievement of students using multiple measures and the teacher characteristics that drive achievement.
- Use the data collection systems to hold institutions - including community colleges - more accountable for the effective preparation of teachers and paraprofessionals.

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