

## **Culturally Insulated Students: Assessing the Diversity Disposition Gap in a Predominantly White University with a New Instrument, the Culturally Responsive Educator Test**

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*This article describes an attempt to assess dispositions toward cultural and racial diversity for preservice and inservice teachers in a predominantly white university. Using the Culturally Responsive Educator Test (CRET), preservice and inservice teachers were assessed on how they represent themselves as culturally responsive teachers and how the education program influences this representation. Findings suggest that the majority of candidates readily focused on students with special education needs and did not address the culturally and racially diverse students in the given task scenario. However, when additional information was given to candidates that the purpose of the task was diversity related, many were able to perform well. Candidates' abilities to develop sound lesson plans improved significantly from beginning to midpoint and from midpoint to end point. Education departments can influence the behaviors and beliefs of culturally insulated teacher candidates.*

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There is a road many have yet to travel. Being culturally responsive requires that our teacher education program candidates move well beyond summarizing best practices, reiterating ethical issues, and listing characteristics of culturally diverse groups. Candidates need to begin to look at themselves critically. Culturally responsive teaching involves being reflective and self-conscious, and analyzing one's own teaching beliefs and behaviors (Gay & Kirkland, 2003). It requires not only teaching knowledge, but also a consciousness that leads to an ongoing evaluation of what is taught, for what purpose, and to whom.

Parker Palmer (1998) remarked that we must know ourselves because we teach who we are. Frieberg and Driscoll (2000), while addressing pre-service teachers, expressed a similar viewpoint: "although knowledge is power, knowledge about yourself is perhaps the greatest power. The power of discovering what you are doing and how you can change gives you control

of your teaching life" (p.434). That self-reflective power should be marshaled in courses that address cultural diversity to help candidates: recognize otherwise implicit and unexamined cultural biases; become knowledgeable about students' cultural backgrounds; be able and willing to use culturally appropriate classroom teaching strategies; and make a commitment to build caring and respectful classroom communities (Gay, 2004).

These issues often become evident to faculty members preparing teachers. I had started my first session teaching a graduate level special education course entitled "Team Collaboration" a few weeks ago. I distributed a syllabus and reviewed the goals, objectives, and benchmark assignment. The core assignment asked students to analyze and revise an ineffective collaboration plan that contributed to a minority student failing in school. The School of Education core values (Adelphi University, 2004), regarding teacher candidates that are addressed in the

course, included statements to the effect that teacher candidates should:

- Cultivate dispositions that demonstrate advocacy for all of their students and the communities in which they work.
- Nurture learning communities that demonstrate respect and honor for all cultures.

These core value statements were developed and agreed upon by our faculty. When the first class session ended and as students and I walked toward the building exit, I experienced a reminder of the chasm often evident between faculty members' and students' dispositions. A graduate student proudly announced that she "placed herself" and would do her student teaching next year in the same elementary school that she had attended. She then said that the best part was that she would save up to two hours a day by walking a block to her school instead of traveling to where the university might have placed her. She received what appeared to be congratulations from some of her classmates. What was unstated was that this student planned to circumvent the program's policy and avoid student teaching in a culturally and racially diverse school.

Bennett (1986) cautioned that sensitivity toward diversity is not a natural occurrence for any individual and demands new awareness and attitudes. He specified developmental stages of growth in cultural sensitivity and suggested that teacher preparation faculty members need to diagnose and sequence training based on a phenomenological model. He argued that, "the concept of fundamental cultural difference is also the most problematical and threatening idea that many of us ever encounter. Students (and sometimes instructors) employ a wide range of strategies to avoid confronting the implications of fundamental difference" (p.181). Bennett concluded that teachers

who adapt instruction are empathetic and construe events "as if" they were the other person. The empathy may only be mental and superficial at one extreme or result in well planned words and actions that help bridge the gap between the culture of the diverse student's world and that of the classroom.

Based on the 2000 census, approximately 40% of public school students are racially, culturally, economically, and linguistically different from the teaching staff, which is 86% Caucasian (Hodgkinson, 2002).

Many of the students attending our suburban university campus might be called *culturally insulated*: demographics and experiences make it unlikely that they have had real life experiences with culturally or racially different people. The autobiographies they compose in my courses often note their parents fleeing the city to a safer, better environment for their families as an example of a supportive and loving upbringing. Escaping and avoiding experiences with diverse groups have taught these students that staying within their own culture is a privilege to be tenaciously defended. It might explain why some of our graduates work as teacher aides for a few years in local schools awaiting a vacancy rather than accepting a teaching appointment right after graduation in a school in what may be perceived as a less desirable community.

Cultural insulation raises a question: If you look away or run away, can you deny the existence of people very different from yourself? Behaviors suggest just such a possibility. Yet, if you ask them, our candidates will say that they believe *all* students deserve respect and should be valued in the classroom. The apparent paradox may be explained by what Banks (1994) viewed as white teacher education students' belief that their cultural norms are

neutral and universal; they are unaware of their own racial identity.

#### *Why Assess Cultural Responsiveness?*

Without reflecting on this cultural divide, we may be training teachers at risk of misunderstanding the thinking and actions of culturally different students and treating them inequitably (Weinstein, Tomlinson-Clarke, & Curran, 2004). Teachers need to be more than technically proficient: they should know and inspire their students. Fink (2003) stated that when people learn important things about themselves or about others it allows them to be more effective individuals because it can change their self-image and their ideal-image, the person they want to become.

Combs and Gonzalez (1994), investigating people in the helping professions such as educators, developed hypotheses that distinguished effective helpers from ineffective ones. Namely, effective helpers are considered knowledgeable about themselves and human interrelationships and are ready, willing and able to put said knowledge to work. They suggested that we all observe, make inferences and test those inferences in creating the subjective organization of beliefs that we rely on when we act.

The construction of a complex system of beliefs provides the guidelines for teachers' thoughts and practice for both long-term goals and moment-to-moment decisions. The behavior is a symptom of, or result of, those beliefs that comprise a personal theory of teaching that goes beyond simply knowing how to teach. Combs and Gonzalez (1994) suggested that what teachers do is derived from their beliefs about the purpose of teaching, the capabilities of students, how learning takes place, how teachers and students should interact and how effective they view themselves to be. Thus, whether or not a

teacher offers a lesson effectively addressing the needs of all the students is determined by what is going on inside the teacher.

Stronge (2002) recently reviewed decades of research to define teacher behaviors that contribute to student achievement and described six dispositions of effective teachers including: caring; fairness and respect; enthusiasm and motivation; reflective practice; positive attitude toward teaching; and friendly and personal interactions with students. This research supports the view that dispositions to teach well are related to personal attributes and the quality of one's interactions with others.

#### *Good Teaching and Good Teaching for Diverse Students*

Pre-service teacher preparation programs provide candidates opportunities to learn and apply the skills and strategies of good teaching. Instruction should be differentiated: individually planned and based on individual student needs; specialized using a variety of instructional material supports; intensive being focused on detail, clarity and practice; goal-directed being purposeful and designed to promote self-sufficiency and success; utilizing research-based methods, programs and lessons that are evidenced-based; and guided by student performance with careful, ongoing monitoring and assessment of each student's progress (Heward, 2003).

All of these aspects of good instruction apply to all students. However, diverse students often come to school with limited school-related skills and also have values and experiences that differ from those of the middle-class white culture. To become proficient at differentiating instruction and to focus on skill building without acknowledging and addressing cultural differences is not enough.

Nieto (2005) concluded, “I have found that educators believe they are affirming diversity simply because they say they are” (p. 124). If the focus of instruction is on curriculum content, it may be good teaching, but it puts many diverse learners, particularly urban diverse learners, at a disadvantage. Making a connection with diverse learners’ knowledge and experiences enables them to be motivated, resilient and accomplished (Williams & Woods, 1997).

These experiences include influences from the home, school, and community at large that impact their thinking, language, beliefs, values, and behaviors. Good teaching for diverse students goes beyond curriculum expertise; it requires knowledge of students’ out-of-school experiences and finding ways of incorporating them into instructional activities; finding out what is important to students and trying to build lessons around their strengths and experiences.

It also requires reflective awareness that background differences exist and must be addressed. The teacher who reads from his/her personal favorite books about animals, the friendly policeman, or planting vegetable gardens may not be offering interesting or meaningful content for disadvantaged students living in low rent apartments. Reading lessons to build vocabulary, fluency and comprehension skills work best when the reader can relate to the story. This speaks to respecting and connecting to students, not just differentiation.

Marshall (2001) noted that culturally responsive teachers address influences on self-concept development by: helping all students feel that they are of value and are competent; letting students have some control over tasks and action; and having students learn interpersonal skills.

Children sense instantly whether support for diversity is superficial or

genuine. Ysseldyke, Algozzine & Thurlow, (2000) suggested that culturally responsive educators successfully address the following questions:

- Am I tailoring my curriculum so that it is relevant to my students' interests and ambitions as well as their cultural identity?
- Am I aware of my students’ various learning styles, and do my teaching strategies reflect this awareness?
- Are the books and other materials I use reflective of diversity: ethnicity, culture, race, class, gender, age and academic disability?
- Are the images on the walls, bulletin boards, etc., reflective of diversity?

It is important to distinguish between those we are “training” to be little more than technically adequate lesson providers from candidates we are successfully nurturing to be reflective and responsive, that is, able to connect with students on an empowering, authentic, and mutually respectful level. We are failing the former group, leaving their dispositions unexamined. The term diversity dispositions often refers to one’s values and beliefs related to concepts such as honesty, social justice, caring about all students and their communities, and fairness. Candidates who are culturally responsive have positive dispositions toward diversity and are likely to teach diverse students in a caring and engaging manner.

We should attempt to find out what images educators have of themselves as culturally responsive teachers in the classroom. In preparing a lesson for a class that includes students with special education needs, for example, it is responsive to provide differentiated instruction, in recognition of learning rates and styles that diverge from the mainstream. These “accommodations” can make the lesson meaningful and relevant for students who might otherwise be unmotivated, frustrated and confused. The opportunity for students with special needs to participate and

contribute in a manner that maximizes learning can be seen in the differentiated physical classroom space layout, adapted and specialized materials, and support personnel, to name a few.

The culturally responsive teacher can address differences as well as deficits among students. If this same class also includes students who are culturally and racially diverse, what would the culturally responsive teacher think and do in preparing and carrying out a lesson? A lesson that ignores the cultural identity or assets of these students would appear less responsive than one that encourages students to construct meaning from accommodative materials and instructional formats related to their daily lives.

### The Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the diversity dispositions of culturally insulated students at a predominately white suburban university. It attempts to assess dispositions regarding diversity by exploring what teaching in a diverse classroom looks like, using concrete and specific details rather than academic abstractions.

The study also attempts to understand how our teacher preparation program's candidates change as culturally responsive teachers at transition points in their college program: admission, mid-point, and end of program. Do teacher preparation programs impact the cultural sensitivity among candidates whose life experiences are vastly different from the diverse students in today's schools? If there were an impact on diversity dispositions, when would it become evident?

The current and previous versions of the assessment instrument were given to approximately eighty undergraduate and graduate special educators and general

educators attending Adelphi University during 2004. The study sample included undergraduates in our five year teacher preparation program as well as masters level preservice and inservice educators at various transition points in the dual (special education - regular education) masters program. Most of these students lived in middle-class Long Island towns and commuted locally to our suburban campus. A demographic questionnaire, filled out after taking the assessment task (see later section), showed that most suburban candidates had little or no schooling experience with minority students, may have attended parochial schools during their schooling and spoke only English. In contrast, more than half of our urban campus graduate students considered themselves a minority group member, had low to lower middle-class socio-economic status, and about a third spoke a language other than English at home.

In the following sections, I will introduce a new assessment instrument called the Culturally Responsive Educator Test (CRET), I will explain its administration and scoring, discuss ethical considerations in its use, tell its theoretical and research underpinnings, and suggest future validity/ reliability verification. Then I will discuss the results of the study and its implications.

### *A New Assessment Instrument*

An instrument that may measure teacher education program candidates' dispositions toward educating diverse students, the Culturally Responsive Educator Test (CRET), directs a candidate to draw and then describe two pictures of the candidate as a teacher; the first at work currently, and the second at work in an ideal teaching environment.

Drawing tests, such as the Human Figure Drawing Test (Koppitz, 1968), and

Chambers' Draw-A-Scientist Test (1983) attempt to measure underlying values, ideas, and feelings using less transparent stimuli than many traditional direct measures of attitude and performance. Recently, the Draw-A-Scientist Checklist (Thomas & Pederson, 2003) modified the evaluation of the open ended drawing task, using a dichotomous checklist to measure teaching training program candidates' preferred teaching style. The CRET incorporates this evaluation format, attempting to assess candidates' beliefs and behaviors toward teaching a diverse group of students. The directions for this new assessment, the CRET, are given below.

*Directions for Drawing #1.* These instructions are written on the uppermost part of an 8 1/2 X 11 inch sheet of paper. "Draw a picture of yourself as an educator teaching, now, in an urban public school classroom. You are teaching a language arts lesson to 28 fifth-graders among whom are students with special education needs and students from racial and cultural minorities. If you do not have experience working in schools, use observations, readings, etc. as a basis for the drawing. Include what you and students are doing as well as details of the classroom itself. Drawing ability is not important and you may use simple representations such as stick figures. Label objects, people, activity, etc., where it will provide clarity."

*Drawing #2.* These instructions are written on the uppermost part of an 8 1/2 X 11 inch sheet of paper. "Draw a picture of yourself as an educator teaching in the future. There are no restrictions or constraints whatsoever and you teach in an ideal or perfect classroom situation. As before, you are teaching a language arts lesson to 28 fifth-graders among whom are students with special education needs and students from racial and cultural minorities. Draw a classroom scene; include what you and

students are doing as well as details of the classroom itself. Artistic ability is not important and you may use simple, representations such as stick figures. Label objects, people, activity, etc., where it will provide clarity."

#### *Scoring Components of the Culturally Responsive Educator Test Drawings*

Projective tests like the CRET and Draw-A-Scientist Test allow the examinee to show unconscious aspects of their attitudes and values by requiring them to fill in a blank page. Deeply held and not always on-the-surface personal theories and convictions about teaching, learning and students can be seen in what they select to portray or reveal. When asked to depict what the teacher and students are doing and how the physical aspects of the classroom are arranged, the examinee draws upon images including emotionally charged memories, and personal experiences that shape their current expectations and beliefs about education.

Drawings of specific details of the teaching act can demand that beliefs and principles have concrete, practical, real-life shape and form. What does a classroom fostering respectful and caring interactions look like? Where is the teacher situated in relation to students? What materials and activities ensure that all students learn well? Many, but not every key disposition that is written about can readily be depicted. For example, in a drawing showing a teacher listening to a student speak, we do not know whether the teacher is listening to be able to alter the lesson for greater relevance and connection to the student's everyday reality. The narrative (described below) provides such an opportunity. Instructing candidates to use simple figures can reduce the impact of varying levels of drawing ability, clearly labeled objects and activities.

The CRET addresses three different aspects of teaching: the teacher, the students, and the learning environment.

The Teacher Section of the CRET is divided into two subsections that focus on the teacher's role/activity (demonstrating, whole class lecturing, leading a small group activity, etc.) and the teacher's position (location with respect to students such as at the head of the classroom, and posture).

The Student Section of the instrument is likewise divided into two subsections focusing on the activities of students (passively receiving information, actively responding to the teacher and/or peers) and students' positions (sitting/standing position, small clusters of desks or rows of seats within the classroom).

The third section, Learning Environment, consists of how elements typically found in classrooms, such as symbols of teaching are utilized (chalkboard, charts, computers, manipulatives, etc.) and the type and purpose of materials adapted or modified to meet students' learning style, interest, cultural background, etc.

*Directions for Narratives* Directions for both narratives are the same. These instructions are written on the uppermost part of an 8 1/2 X 11 inch sheet of paper. "Write a description of your drawing. Include, but do not necessarily restrict yourself to, a thorough response to each of the following:

A) I am engaged in this behavior because \_\_\_\_\_. B) The students are engaged in this activity because \_\_\_\_\_. C) What I am trying to achieve or create is \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_. D) Learning is promoted because \_\_\_\_\_.

*Posttest Demographics Questionnaire.* After completing the CRET, candidates fill out a brief questionnaire to obtain information related to experiences with

diverse students. The questions are shown below.

1. Do you or your parents speak a language other than English? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
2. Your current economic status is best characterized as one of the following:  
Low income \_\_\_  
Middle income \_\_\_  
Upper middle or high income \_\_\_
3. I consider myself to be a member of a cultural or racial minority group. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
4. Other people consider me to be a member of a cultural or racial minority group. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
5. In my school career, I have attended a parochial or private school Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_
6. In grades K-12, I attended schools that had:  
No racially or culturally diverse students \_\_\_  
Some racially or culturally diverse students \_\_\_  
Many racially or culturally diverse students \_\_\_
7. I am a female \_\_\_ male \_\_\_
8. My classroom experience as either a teacher, aide, paraprofessional, or related service provider is:  
None \_\_\_; 1 year or less \_\_\_;  
2-5 years \_\_\_; More than 5 years \_\_\_

#### *Scoring Components of the Narrative*

In the narrative, educators express their dispositions toward diversity in responding to prompts about planning, intention, objectives and outcomes. A major focus is on essential skills and strategies that will respectfully incorporate students' personal experiences from other cultures. The narrative should expand upon and be consistent with the accompanying drawing. This focus is embedded in a standards-oriented or student-centered teaching orientation.

To receive a high score, the narrative should show active student engagement, a teacher with a caring and respectful "hands-on" participation with all students, and a learning environment that meets diverse students' needs. Conversely, more traditional classroom narratives may show the teacher in front of the class, teaching

from a chalkboard, or lecturing to the whole class. These latter classrooms might display the traditional rows-placement of desks or chairs, as opposed to groups working in clusters or centers around the classroom.

Descriptions of teacher-centered thinking about subject matter knowledge as being central to the learning process and led by a teacher who organizes and delivers learning, would receive a low score. The traditional classroom depiction is not culturally responsive and receives a low score as it fails to indicate how the lesson motivates students, addresses cultural and racial differences or fosters important diversity goals, such as developing independent learning strategies.

The difference between the current and the ideal teaching situations may reveal a teaching candidate's beliefs and attitudes about teaching diverse students that are not yet acted upon. Drawing and discussing optimal physical layouts, mentioning recent research-based curriculum strategies, and describing important but unavailable resources for developing cultural awareness may demonstrate the candidate's important visions of effective teaching.

### *Scoring*

The drawings and narratives are scored according to a dichotomous checklist of components: present/not present for drawings; and stated/unstated for narrative descriptions. Scoring focuses on three aspects of the teaching-learning process: the teacher, the students, and the learning environment. Higher scores suggest an effective and cohesive set of materials strategies and goals promoting diverse students' learning.

One might consider four levels on a continuum of responses:

1. Lacks cultural responsiveness- no attempt to acknowledge or address the diverse students in the classroom. (Score = 0)

2. Approaching cultural responsiveness- mentions objects, strategies, goals and outcomes pertaining to diversity, but in a superficial, unconnected and unreflective manner. (Score = 2)

3. Basic cultural responsiveness- instructional elements are relevant and designed to engage diverse students. (Score = 6)

4. Proficient cultural responsiveness- dynamic, multidimensional instruction where ideas about valuing and supporting diverse learners are reflected in sound lesson design, teaching and learning activity. Teachers frame their lessons to give the class an opportunity to understand diverse students' perceptions, experiences and abilities. (Score = 10)

### *Two Types of Derived Scores*

There are two different ways that the CRET may be assessed, depending upon time constraints and needs of the assessor.

*Type I Scoring.* The assessor looks only at drawings to quickly assess whether a lesson depicts culturally responsive elements, such as the resources used in the lesson; interactions among students and between teacher and students; and lesson content. Level 4 drawings, might show students telling or acting out stories based on children's games or folk-art from students' native lands or local communities.

*Type II Scoring.* The assessor looks at both the drawing and narrative as combinable sets of scores. The more interrelated and comprehensive the drawing and narrative account, the higher the overall scoring.

Consider the example of a candidate drawing a differentiated lesson where small groups of students write about, and take turns sharing, vivid early childhood memories, as the teacher assists some students having difficulty communicating their ideas. The accompanying narrative

describes the goal of the lesson as fostering respectful, motivating and authentic opportunities for all students to learn about each other in the context of practicing essay writing. The narrative states that the teacher assists students that need prompting or support to ensure all are learning in a safe and harmonious atmosphere. Furthermore, the candidate indicates that the way to create a sense of community, understanding and empathy in the classroom is by discussing differences and similarities of ideas, experiences and feelings.

A high score would be awarded for this drawing and narrative because it showed *how* elements of the lesson foster both an understanding of various cultural perspectives and experiences and helps all students develop competence in important skills.

A lower score is derived when the narrative contains a checklist of terms like differentiation, cultural perspectives or sensitizing students, but fails to concomitantly indicate how this comes together to achieve desired goals, such as valuing differences or giving all students a chance to learn. In this case, neither the drawing nor narrative suggests operationalizing the listed aspects of diversity when considering the teacher's behavior, the lesson content or the student activity.

The lowest scores are for drawings and narratives that show no awareness of, or attempt to acknowledge, the diversity among the students. For example, the candidate draws a scene where all students are listening to the teacher speak about nouns, adjectives and verbs, and the narrative speaks about learning from the lesson because students are practicing important prerequisites to effective paragraph writing. All students are doing the same thing, the same way, at the same time and there is no

attempt to infuse aspects of diversity into the lesson.

### *Ethical Issues*

Preservice and inservice teachers' diversity dispositions may be highly subjective and naive, but we do not yet know how much transformation is possible in an atmosphere of honest and critical guided examination over time. We should be developing ongoing assessments of dispositions so that we can identify and better understand the impact of training efforts that may extend and transform dispositions over time.

However, at some universities, dispositions are critically evaluated for determining admission to programs. This seems unfair and misguided. Instead, we should be attentive to newly admitted candidates' dispositions, not to judge them but to create a baseline from which the student can gauge incremental changes. We need to learn more about the diversity of beliefs and values among our candidates, particularly among our culturally insulated candidates. Can we foster an atmosphere of inclusion and social justice if our candidates find that we want to quantify and measure their dispositions against the "right" ones?

### *CRET Design*

The CRET is based on values, theories, empirical research and standards from the following sources: The Adelphi University School of Education Core Values, 2004; Professional Standards for Educators (Council for Exceptional Children, 2001); and Danielson's Four Domains of Teaching Responsibility (1996). The research and current literature sources for the CRET dispositions of effective and culturally responsive teachers include writings by Anton-Oldenberg (2004), Gay (2002), Gay and Kirkland (2003); Nieto (2002) Ryan and Alcock (2002), Stronge (2002), Tomlinson,

(2003), and Ysseldyke, Algozzine, and Thurlow, 2000. The Dispositions Self-Inquiry Questionnaire (Yero, 2002) and the Draw-a-Scientist-Test Checklist (Thomas & Pedersen, 2003) provided a framework for the instrument design. Yero (2002) provided the metaphor framework used in the narratives and Thomas and Pederson (2003) provided the three dimensions, teacher, student and learning environment, used in the drawing scoring rubric.

### *Validity and Reliability*

To date, no statistical data has been compiled for validity or reliability. Five fellow Adelphi faculty have administered current and earlier versions of the CRET and two compared their students' test results with other indicators of cultural responsiveness obtained from essays and reaction papers. One professor considered the mostly low scores on the CRET as consistent with scores obtained on his own assignment rubrics completed earlier in the term. The other professor agreed with seven out of eight CRET scores as accurately identifying high to low levels of cultural awareness among student teachers finishing their dual masters certification program. This is an informal and preliminary indicator for estimating criterion-related validity, to be assessed more rigorously as more students take the CRET.

Three of the five professors suggested changes in the scoring criteria and in response, the scoring type I was recently developed. It promotes reliability as the administration and scoring are simple. Professors found interpreting the scores involved minimal errors when the following rating rubric was developed for cultural responsiveness:

#### A: Challenging Sameness Beliefs

The classroom environment engages teacher and students to (1) create a sense of community, understanding and empathy in the classroom by examining

differences among students' ideas, experiences and feelings; and (2) promote social skills development in a safe and supportive manner.

#### B: Contextualization

The lesson promotes (a) connections between students' prior experience or knowledge from home, school, or community and the new learning activity/information, *or* (b) drawing upon some aspect of diverse students' everyday experience in the language arts project or activity.

#### C: Instructional Conversation

The conversation between students and between teacher and students reflects the goal of the lesson as fostering respectful, motivating and authentic opportunities for all students to learn about each other.

## Findings

Candidates near the end of the teacher preparation program tended to be more detailed, specific and comprehensive in depicting the teaching act than newly admitted candidates. The former group placed less emphasis on materials and more on interactions, differentiated tasks and hands-on engagement to promote learning. Often, the narrative and drawing described a classroom that seemed to have an orchestrated rhythm, with material resources adapted, integrated and utilized well during learning.

End point candidates typically described how and why they interacted with students, for example, telling stories using books that students selected to build on students' background knowledge and to enhance their cultural identity, monitoring and encouraging social skill learning to prepare students for responsible citizenship, playing games with students to increase participation and enjoyment of learning. Work was individualized and often both the drawing and the narrative showed a special

and general educator collaborating to provide large and small group instruction.

One student teacher's response to the ideal classroom situation was typical. It depicted four simultaneous activities in the room: a single student observed plants in a science center; a paraprofessional helped another student with the language arts lesson; a large group of students discussed language arts with a general educator; and a special educator was sitting among a small group working on similar lesson objectives with different materials. Thus, this terminal point candidate was able to vary materials, content complexity and tasks to create an optimum learning environment. However, differentiated work was not used as a vehicle for addressing aspects of diversity, such as each student's unique way of thinking. Differentiation may have been viewed as necessary and sufficient in and of itself.

For all candidates, the CRET provided an opportunity to describe beliefs about how to help individuals as well as the whole class to learn. Many new and some midpoint graduate level candidates and most undergraduates filled classroom perimeter space with unused centers and objects without specifically indicating how resources enhanced learning. Often the teacher stood in front of rows of desks or clusters of desks and led the lesson by lecturing. Students were stationary and restricted to raising their hands yet the narratives indicated the learning goal was making learning comfortable and fun.

Many midpoint candidates often drew more active teachers and students with learning strategies and materials described in some detail. Still often absent was the endpoint candidate's attempt to describe what needed to occur for students to learn well. This contrast between the end point and midpoint, and between midpoint and beginning candidates, suggests that

improvement in scoring on the CRET may reflect growth in knowledge and dispositions about effective teaching over time.

A disturbing finding was that while many candidates drew and described classrooms where the needs of special education and general education students were addressed, the needs of culturally and racially diverse students were very often ignored. In a class of ten student teachers recently completing the CRET at our suburban campus, only one candidate even mentioned culturally relevant material and only one other student acknowledged or addressed the diversity in the classroom superficially. Among twenty-six suburban campus undergraduates from various Arts and Sciences programs with a minor in general education taking the CRET, only two mentioned diverse students at all. These were predominately level 1 with a few level 2 responses. These findings were consistent with those measuring changes in pre-service teacher education candidates' attitudes toward multicultural education conducted by Correa, Hudson and Hayes (2004). The researchers found "shallow" levels of cultural awareness both before and after a course on culturally and linguistically diverse children and families.

On our urban campus, among a group of sixteen candidates beginning our dual certification masters program, less than half referred to cultural or racial diversity in any manner on the CRET. Only a few indicated they had ideas how to infuse cultural or racial issues into a lesson or make equity an aspect of learning.

While there was a greater awareness of diversity among the urban group than among the suburban group, test results were unanticipated and disappointing. All but one person in this group of candidates had some or extensive prior school experience with minority students, and more than half said

they were considered by themselves or others to be from cultural or racial minorities. One might expect these candidates to have a considerable knowledge, acceptance and understanding of the beliefs, customs, language, religion, and typical learning issues of diverse learners. However, nine out of sixteen candidates chose to ignore the needs and interests of the diverse students on the CRET and there were only four level 3 and one level 4 responses.

There was one exception to this pattern of responding on the CRET. When the demographics questionnaire (five of the eight questions were about culture, racial and socio-economic status), was included with the test instructions rather than *after* test completion, results were dramatically different. In a graduate level special education class with nine suburban students at the midpoint in their program, five of nine drew and described racially or culturally responsive lessons. Four of the lessons were level 4 responses with themes such as: discussing differences and similarities among students; the teacher facilitating small group discussions for positive relationship building; materials that presented perspectives and contributions of diverse people; and a primary focus on students learning about each other from each other. Apparently, in this instance, when many of the candidates determined that this was a test of their ability to create culturally and racially responsive lessons, a majority responded capably. They did learn how to develop lessons to effectively instruct diverse students in our courses. Similar students, however, did not demonstrate this ability under the standard test conditions.

#### Discussion and Conclusions

When using the CRET to evaluate dispositions, the results are disappointing.

For the majority of our candidates, addressing individual differences meant drawing and describing accommodations only for students with special learning needs. They ignored the students from racial and cultural minorities. Are these educators ill prepared or uncomfortable addressing diverse students? The latter conclusion seems most plausible.

Perhaps insulated candidates see only what they want to see. The CRET instructions gave candidates two prompts to attend to diversity in their lesson plan; "Draw a picture of yourself as an educator teaching, now, in an urban public school classroom. You are teaching a language arts lesson to twenty-eight fifth-graders among whom are students with special education needs and students from racial and cultural minorities." (Underlining does not appear in the instructions).

Professors who administered or critiqued the CRET discussed how preservice and inservice candidates typically deal with diversity and multicultural content that is infused in many courses. All five professors stated that most candidates avoid the topic in class discussions. Furthermore, when graded assignments required candidates to respond to diversity related questions, candidates frequently left those items blank.

The candidates who saw the demographic questionnaire prior to filling out the CRET and subsequently gave above average culturally responsive answers may offer further insight. Candidates aware of what their professors are looking for have been conditioned to give them just that and are often rewarded with high grades. Genuine beliefs are not important and remain unexamined.

Direct measures of dispositions, particularly the popular technique of pre- and post course survey change scores, such as "list all the culturally relevant ideas you

know about lesson planning," can be easily manipulated. Indirect measures are less subject to manipulation but do not guarantee that examinees are indicating their true dispositions clearly and fully when they think the task is measuring something else. Perhaps the candidates who saw the demographic survey before completing the CRET were most clear and comprehensive because they thought they knew what was expected. They were capable of responding well about diversity and thus the ill prepared argument does not seem to fit. Perhaps the examinees that filled out the demographic questionnaires after taking the CRET may have focused on other issues at the expense of communicating retrievable and appropriate culturally responsive dispositions. Only the candidates know and that is the real issue.

It may be less distressing to talk about disabilities than differences. We all want to help the student with learning deficits and teams of specialists have documented what problems these students have and how we can accommodate them while comfortably adhering to the traditional information transmission model of teaching.

Most students from racial or cultural minorities, however, do not come to class with individualized educational plans. Treating these students as if differences did not exist or matter avoids having to change teaching methods or experience uncomfortable feelings of bias. The insulated candidates do not have to consider a reality very different from their own or change what and how to teach if no differences in backgrounds, preparedness to learn, values, etc. are acknowledged. Despite the fact that the CRET directions did not ask candidates to choose which group of students to address in the lesson plan, ignoring the diverse students made the task easier.

Dispositions reflect an individual concern about honesty, fairness, caring, responsibility and social justice (NCATE, 2002). If candidates' disposition assessment responses are based on manipulation, disingenuous statements or opportunistic gamesmanship, we have created a self-defeating milieu. We must first establish a climate of open and honest reflection and then hope that critical self-examination leads to airing and transforming the hidden beliefs, attitudes, and values of the culturally insulated.

A paradigm shift is suggested from teacher education as "training" to "drawing out" pre- and in-service candidates, valuing process over product. We should rely on techniques that provide opportunities to problem-solve and reflect to bring together inquiry about self and teaching in context.

I believe the objectives of the preservice and inservice teacher education programs addressing dispositions are threefold. The first is to guide prospective and practicing teachers to identify and understand their dispositions, especially those related to teaching diverse learners, as knowing how to teach well requires self-knowledge. The second is to determine whether or not there are activities or experiences that could alter these apparently hidden and stressful dispositions. The third is to transform dispositions and a lack of critical responsiveness in particular, by exposing teacher candidates to the school as an institution, viewing dispositions as including politically and socially relevant aspects. The focus should be to accelerate the development of practical and well-founded work-related dispositions to sustain novice teachers for the challenges ahead in today's diverse classrooms.

Perhaps we as faculty need to be less dogmatic when it comes to diversity dispositions and encourage candidates to examine what they genuinely believe. We

are so passionate about social justice, inclusive communities and advocating for equality of opportunities for diverse students, that culturally insulated candidates may feel we are trying to persuade and pressure them. They may feel disconnected from the rhetoric. Candidates need to ask themselves about their *ability* and *willingness* to use culturally appropriate classroom teaching strategies.

Once evaluation is introduced however, the opportunity for deep reflection is compromised. Candidates who say and do what is necessary to obtain a good grade may be able to ignore their true feelings. The students who detected that the right answer on the CRET must involve culturally responsive lessons, complied and gave what they thought would be valued by the professor. If the CRET is given at critical periods in the program for candidates to *privately* reflect upon, it is possible to sensitize candidates to beliefs that they may be willing to deconstruct and change. They can best interpret the significance of their drawings and narratives in regards to bias and ethnocentrism.

Finally, some of the concerns this study raised include: Do our moral and ethical arguments, reflected in our mission statements on diversity, fail to resonate with our candidates because we are dedicated to promoting the “right diversity beliefs?” Do we spend as much time helping our candidates examine their myths and stereotypes about diverse students as we do regarding students with special learning needs?

If the CRET were given to demographically different school of education candidates attending universities with a similar commitment to address diversity, would the findings be similar? Further research efforts will attempt to assess larger candidate samples to better understand their diversity dispositions.

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