

# RESEARCH-BASED RESOURCES: CULTURAL COMPETENCY OF SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS IN RELATION TO STUDENT SUCCESS

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These selected resources are research studies or research reviews related to cultural competency and student success. They were used in writing *Culturally Responsive Practices for Student Success: A Regional Sampler*, the June 2005 issue of NWREL's By Request series.

Very few studies in the literature review are experimental research; most are correlational case studies, and research reviews or syntheses of other studies. The key words used in the search were **culturally competent, culturally responsive, culturally congruent, culturally proficient, and culturally relevant.**

There are a number of definitions of cultural competence. In *Cultural Competence: A Primer for Educators*, by Jerry V. Diller and Jean Moule (2005)\*, the authors say,

Put most simply, it is the ability to successfully teach students who come from different cultures other than

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\*See *Culturally Responsive Practices for Student Success: A Regional Sampler*.

your own. It entails mastering certain personal and interpersonal awarenesses and sensitivities, learning specific bodies of cultural knowledge, and mastering a set of skills that, taken together, underlie effective cross-cultural teaching.

The Oregon State Action for Educational Leadership Project [SAELP] reviewed many definitions and compiled the following:

- ◆ Cultural competence is based on a commitment to social justice and equity.
- ◆ Culture refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communication, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and norms of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups.
- ◆ Cultural competence is a developmental process occurring at individual and system levels that evolves and is sustained over time. Recognizing that individuals begin with specific lived experiences and biases, and that working to accept multiple worldviews is a difficult choice and task, cultural competence requires that individuals and organizations:
  - a. Have a defined set of values and principles, demonstrated behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively in a cross-cultural manner.
  - b. Demonstrate the capacity to 1) value diversity, 2) engage in self-reflection, 3) facilitate effectively (manage) the dynamics of difference, 4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge, and 5) adapt to the diversity and the cultural contexts of the students, families, and communi-

ties they serve, 6) support actions that foster equity of opportunity and services.

c. Institutionalize, incorporate, evaluate, and advocate the above in all aspects of leadership, policymaking, administration, practice, and service delivery while systematically involving staff, students, families, key stakeholders, and communities.

See the SAELP Web site for a list of resources on cultural competency: [www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/saelp/resrcescultcomp.aspx](http://www.ode.state.or.us/opportunities/grants/saelp/resrcescultcomp.aspx)

From a review of more than 50 research articles and reports, the following 17 were most indicative of the research on the important components of cultural competence in education. Articles in this bibliography cover research on effective teaching of African American, Native American, and English language learner students. All the articles focus on practices and pedagogy that are effective for all children to reach high academic standards and succeed in school.

The following is a summary of the most important characteristics of culturally responsive and competent educators and schools derived from this research (in no particular order):

- ◆ A climate of inclusion, respect, connection, and caring is fostered in the school and classroom. Interpersonal relationships are built and fostered, and a learning community culture is developed.
- ◆ Bridges are built between academic learning and students' prior understanding, knowledge, native language, and values. Culture and native language (and cultural

dialect) are valued and used as assets in learning, rather than deficits. “Empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Ladson Billings, 1994\*).

- ◆ High expectations and high standards are set for all students. Remedial work for students is not acceptable. Activities are designed to foster higher order thinking.
- ◆ The most effective classroom practices are hands-on, cooperative, and culturally aligned. There is less emphasis on lecture. As Ladson-Billings says, educators should “dig knowledge out of students” rather than “fill them up with it.”
- ◆ Teachers find out as much as possible about their students’ culture, language, and learning styles so they can modify curriculum and instruction accordingly.
- ◆ Teachers realize that students are at different stages of acculturation: “Lesson plans need to blend information on how students can become more comfortable with American culture with ways that other students can become culturally responsive to members of diverse cultures” (Stickey, 2003\*).

Some of the annotations below are excerpts from previously published abstracts found in ERIC or listed with the journal article.

**APTHORP, H.S., D’AMATO, E.D., & RICHARDSON, A.** (2003). *Effective standards-based practices for Native American students: A review of research literature* (Rev. ed.). Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning. Retrieved November 11, 2004, from [www.mcrel.org/PDF/Standards/5021RR\\_Practices\\_NAstudents.pdf](http://www.mcrel.org/PDF/Standards/5021RR_Practices_NAstudents.pdf)

**Literature Type:** Research review

**Summary:** The report reviewed available evidence on the effectiveness of particular education programs and practices for improving Native American student achievement in English and mathematics.

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:** Positive relationships between improved student achievement and certain programs and characteristics were found, including:

- ◆ Teaching indigenous language and literacy first, followed by instruction in learning to read and write English and promotion of bilingualism
- ◆ Emphasizing reading comprehension and peer interactions and frequent monitoring of student progress
- ◆ Using culturally congruent materials and instruction in mathematics

Although causal inferences about program effectiveness cannot be made with these studies, some of the control group studies ruled out certain background characteristics as a variable. Further research is needed to determine what role cultural congruence plays in academic success

and its influence beyond Alaskan, Navajo, and Hawaiian communities. The authors do not know if cultural congruence directly and independently affects student achievement or if its impact depends on a combination of factors.

**Conrad, N.K., Gong, Y., Sipp, L., & Wright, L.** (2004). Using Text Talk as a gateway to culturally responsive teaching. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 31(3), 187-192.

**Literature Type:** Observational single event intervention with three second-grade classrooms—one rural, one urban, and one university laboratory school of diverse populations.

**Summary:** In three second-grade classrooms within diverse educational settings, the theory of culturally responsive teaching was used in combination with Text Talk, a strategy generally used with young children during read-alouds to foster oral language and comprehension. Using carefully constructed questions that help students “grapple with conceptually challenging ideas in the text,” students respond and teachers ask further questions for students to elaborate on their answers. The questions link their background knowledge with the text. Culturally responsive teaching builds on prior knowledge and experiences, and attempts to increase academic achievement by making learning more relevant to children’s frames of reference. Texts are chosen so that children can make connections with their real-life experiences and contain challenging ideas and content. “High expectations were set for all students and indepth responses were encouraged.”

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:**

- ◆ Overall, students demonstrated extended, indepth responses and insightful thinking when teachers set high expectations for all learners.

- ◆ Use pictures with text to promote children's understanding and sharper focus on the content and fill gaps in missing background knowledge.
- ◆ Select texts that have sophisticated concepts that reflect the cultures of different ethnic groups.
- ◆ Build vocabulary knowledge by selecting words that can be part of everyday speaking vocabulary, while using examples to connect unfamiliar words to the background experiences of students.

**Cooper, P.M.** (2002). Does race matter? A comparison of effective black and white teachers of African American students. In J.J. Irvine (Ed.), *In search of wholeness: African American teachers and their culturally specific classroom practices* (pp. 47-66). New York, NY: Palgrave.

**Literature Type:** Research review

**Summary:** This paper reviewed research on what makes black and white teachers effective in teaching black children. There is a lack of empirical data on the effectiveness of white teachers with black children, as compared with black teachers; however, there are personal narratives of white teachers to gain perspective.

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:** Effective white and black teachers reviewed in this study used the following practices in the classroom:

- ◆ They had high expectations of their students
- ◆ They stressed interpersonal relationships and involvement with family and community
- ◆ They restructured curriculum to appeal to strengths and interests of black children
- ◆ White teachers developed a "hyperconsciousness" about race in the classroom that generated discussions of race relations and gave way to a greater tolerance, if not appreciation, of black children's learning styles

◆ Several differences in teaching styles between black and white teachers were observed:

- White teachers did not generally emphasize authority in conjunction with good teaching.
- Black teachers consistently and pointedly expressed beliefs that black children learned best with a more authority-based, firm style. This seemed to be a reflected value in the African American community, that authority demonstrated caring.
- White teachers spent more time finding alternative curriculum than black teachers, although black teachers did adapt curriculum to a black perspective.

**Doherty, R.W., Hilberg, R.S., Pinal, A., & Tharp, R.G.**

(2003). Five standards and student achievement. *NABE Journal of Research and Practice*, 1(1), 1-24.

For more information see [www.crede.ucsc.edu/standards/standards.html](http://www.crede.ucsc.edu/standards/standards.html)

**Literature Type:** Multivariate correlational studies

**Summary:** This paper summarizes results of two studies that examine the Five Standards for Effective Pedagogy, developed by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence. The five standards are:

- ◆ **Teachers and Students Working Together.** Use instructional group activities in which students and teacher work together to create a product or idea.
- ◆ **Developing Language and Literacy Skills Across the Curriculum.** Apply literacy strategies and develop language competence in all subject areas.
- ◆ **Connecting Lessons to Students' Lives.** Contextualize teaching and curriculum in students' existing experiences in home, community, and school.
- ◆ **Engaging Students With Challenging Lessons.** Maintain challenging standards for student performance; design activities to advance understanding to more complex levels.
- ◆ **Emphasizing Dialogue Over Lectures.** Instruct through teacher-student dialogue, especially academic,

goal-directed, small-group conversations (known as instructional conversations), rather than lecture.

The five standards are the result of three decades of research across cultural, socioeconomic contexts, specifically the KEEP model, a program for at-risk K-3 Native Hawaiian students. Several previous correlational, quasi-experimental, and true experimental designs have shown a consistent relationship between the five standards and a broad range of school success indicators.

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations\*:**

Study 1 found a consistent, positive, and significant relationship between the teachers' use of the Five Standards and student performance on year-end standardized tests. Study 2 found that achievement gains were the greatest when teachers transformed their pedagogy and used the structure as specified by the standards model and use of multiple, simultaneous, diversified activity settings had significant effect on achievement gains.

- ◆ Emphasizing the use of the five standards can help teachers design instructional activities that are meaningfully connected to students' everyday lives and foster complex thinking.
- ◆ Engaging students in small groups with cognitively complex tasks allows for language development, a major vehicle for cognitive development necessary for reading comprehension.

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\*Implications/recommendations can only be offered tentatively, since this is a correlational study.

**Ginsberg, M.B., & Wlodkowski, R.J.** (2000). *Creating highly motivating classrooms for all students: A school-wide approach to powerful teaching with diverse learners*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

**Literature Type:** Literature synthesis and description of research-based approach to a culturally responsive pedagogy.

**Summary:** Authors draw from a synthesis of research on learning theories, cultural studies, and teaching practices to describe key components of a culturally responsive school and pedagogy. They then present practical strategies for applying the Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching. In addition to case studies, sample lessons, and field-tested activities, the book presents guidelines to help organize school improvement initiatives, design professional development agendas, and conceptualize an effective method of evaluation.

The Motivational Framework is built on principles that are meaningful across cultures. The purpose of the framework is to unify teaching practices to “elicit the intrinsic motivation of all learners, so that educators can consistently design learning experiences that matter to and support the success of all students.” The four conditions of the Motivational Framework are:

- ◆ Establishing inclusion where a learning climate is developed in which teachers and students feel respected and connected to one another.
- ◆ Developing a positive attitude refers to employing principles and practices that contribute to a favorable dis-

position toward learning through personal and cultural relevance and choice.

- ◆ Enhancing meaning to bring about challenging and engaging learning that matters to students and has social merit.
- ◆ Having students identify that they are learning something they value.

**Haines, A.H., Lynch, E.W., & Winton, P.J.** (2000). *Moving towards cross-cultural competence in lifelong personnel development: A review of the literature* (CLAS Tech. Rep. No. 3). Champaign, IL: University of Illinois, Early Childhood Research Institute on Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services. Retrieved November 9, 2004, from: <http://clas.uiuc.edu/techreport/tech3.html>

**Literature Type:** Literature review

**Summary:** Little research exists on what works and doesn't work in developing cross-cultural competence in individuals and systems. At present, evaluation is on the individual program level, is short term in nature, and relies on self-reporting and self-assessment for changes in attitude and knowledge. Training materials are more often at the cultural awareness or sensitivity level, rather than at the "competence level."

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:** Describes models and strategies for developing individual competence. The model most often cited in the literature has been developed by Cross and colleagues\*, which outlines a continuum of cultural competence development, including cultural destructiveness, cultural incapacity, cultural blindness, cultural precompetence, and cultural proficiency. Other such models suggest that "cross-cultural competence is not a fixed set of skills that can be obtained or mastered. Instead developing cross-cultural competence is an ongoing process that involves lifelong learning."

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\*Cross, T.L., Bazron, B.J., Dennis, K.W., & Isaacs, M.R. (1989). *Towards a culturally competent system of care*, (Vol. 1). Washington, DC: National Center for Technical Assistance Center for Children's Mental Health, Georgetown University Child Development Center.



Little literature exists that talks about how to promote competencies, what strategies promote changes in cultural attitude, and how changes can be measured. Although measurements do exist, most are based on self-report and are inaccurate. Very few empirical studies exist, and most studies, too, focus on changes in student's cultural competence, not their achievement.

- ◆ Move beyond an additive approach in which only content information about cultures is added to the curriculum rather than implementing transformational or achievement approaches.
- ◆ Examine the hidden curriculum of those in power—attitudes, policies, beliefs, etc.—that perpetuates power relationships and cultural hegemony, and impedes the progress of those who do not understand this curriculum.
- ◆ Address staff development practices: top-down and bottom-up sharing are necessary; collegial support is critical; think big, start small; engage the participants in experiential activities; include procedures for ongoing support, feedback, and monitoring; and consider the impact of technology.

**Hill, F., Kawagley, O., & Barnhardt, R.** (2003). *Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative. Annual report: Phase II, year three, 2002–2003*. Fairbanks, AK: University of Alaska, Alaska Federation of Natives. Retrieved November 10, 2004, from [www.ankn.uaf.edu/AKRSI2003FinalReport.doc](http://www.ankn.uaf.edu/AKRSI2003FinalReport.doc)

**Summary:** This report describes the progress of the eighth year of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative (AKRSI). The goal of the educational reform strategy is to “foster connectivity and complementarity between the formal education system and the indigenous knowledge systems in communities being served in rural Alaska.” This is a schoolwide, systemic initiative focusing on systemic reform at 20 rural school districts that have 90 percent Alaska Native students.

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:**

The study reports detailed data to indicate that the initiative “continues to produce an increase in student achievement scores, a decrease in the dropout rate, an increase in the number of rural students attending college, and an increase in the number of Native students choosing to pursue studies in fields of science, math and engineering.”

The performance indicators of the first eight years of implementation of the AKRSI initiatives show a steady net gain between partner schools over nonparticipating rural schools in percentages of students who are in the upper quartile on eighth-grade standardized achievement tests, as well as gains for both eighth- and 10th-grade students on state standardized assessments in math. Enrollment of first-time rural freshman students at the University of Alaska has increased since 1996. A short summary of AKRSI activities follows.

- ◆ Because of high turnover of teachers, emphasis has been on initiatives that will bring about more stability and continuity in these schools, and preparation of more highly qualified Native teachers and administrators. A wide array of professional development opportunities and licensing requirements are being implemented for capacity building.
- ◆ Native Educator Associations and academies were held where the work of teachers was shared with school staff. Work sessions focus on guidelines for the preparation of culturally responsive teachers, which are being used in preservice and inservice programs around the state.
- ◆ Worked directly with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development to develop high-quality, standards-based, culturally aligned science and mathematics curricula, content, and performance standards. Continuing work is on updating Alaska science standards and performance standards.
- ◆ Created a curriculum clearinghouse to identify, review, and catalog appropriate national and Alaska-based curricula suitable for Alaska Native rural settings and making them available on the AKRSI Web site.
- ◆ Developed Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools, which have been formally adopted by the Alaska State Board of Education and distributed to all schools in the state for implementation. Professional development opportunities have been offered to guide teachers in the use of these standards.

- ◆ Use of hands-on, inquiry-based instruction through curriculum, and Alaska Native science camps and fairs in which students develop projects that incorporate culturally based, scientifically significant concepts.
- ◆ Encouraged and assisted schools to establish higher level math and science classes. As students have seen greater relevance for linking science and math to the needs of their communities, their interest in taking classes has increased. Previously the only classes available were algebra and general science.

**Ladson-Billings, G.** (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African-American children*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

**Literature Type:** Qualitative, ethnographic research

**Summary:** Documents the pedagogical practice of eight highly effective teachers of African American students. This ethnographic study used four components: teacher selection, teacher interviews, classroom observation and videotaping, and collective interpretation and analysis. Standardized test scores were not the only indicator of effectiveness of teachers. Principals and parents were asked to select teachers they believed to be effective.

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:** The following summarize the practices and characteristics that make these educators exemplary teachers of African American students:

- ◆ Teachers empower students intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes.
- ◆ Teachers function as conductors or coaches for their students—assuming responsibility for the students to achieve excellence and/or sharing and shifting that responsibility to the students.
- ◆ Teaching is seen as an art, rather than a skill.
- ◆ Teachers see themselves as part of the community, and teaching as a way to give back to the community.

- ◆ Teachers help students make connections between their local, national, racial, cultural, and global identities.
- ◆ Teacher-student relationships extend beyond the classroom. Teachers are connected to all their students.
- ◆ Teachers encourage a community of learners, rather than individual competitiveness and encourage students to learn collaboratively.
- ◆ Teachers build bridges and scaffolding for learning. They dig knowledge out of children rather than fill them up with it. Knowledge is seen as continuously recreated and recycled.
- ◆ Teachers have a high interest in teaching children of color.
- ◆ Teachers understand the central role of culture.
- ◆ Teachers have high self-esteem and high regard for others.

**Ladson-Billings, G.** (1995). But that's just good teaching! The case for culturally relevant pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 159-165.

**Literature Type:** Discussion of previous three-year observational study of successful teachers of African American students in culturally diverse schools, *The Dreamkeepers* by Ladson-Billings (see page 20).

**Summary:** Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three main principles: students must experience academic success, students must develop or maintain cultural competence, and students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order. Culturally relevant teachers utilize students' culture as a vehicle for learning.

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:** Teachers were selected to participate in the study based on parents' and principals' recommendations. Principals recommended teachers based on low number of discipline referrals, high attendance rates, and standardized test scores. Teachers who were selected by both parents and principals were asked to participate. Study was observational for two years.

- ◆ Researcher went beyond surface teaching strategies to determine common threads of pedagogy.
- ◆ Teachers believed that all students could and must succeed.
- ◆ Teachers saw themselves as part of the community

in the largely African American school district, and saw teaching as a way to give back to the community.

- ◆ Teachers attempted to create a bond with all students.
- ◆ Teachers prioritized creating a community of learners.
- ◆ Teachers encouraged students to teach and learn from each other collaboratively.
- ◆ Teachers were not dependent on state curriculum standards for teaching. The content of the curriculum was always open for critical analysis.
- ◆ Teachers felt passion for and about what they were teaching.

**Larimore, C.K.** (2001). When worlds collide: Native American students navigating dominant culture classrooms (Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2000). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61(07), 2932.

**Literature Type:** Observational study of Native American students.

**Summary:** A group of Native American children in an urban public elementary school were followed across different types of classroom environments, from third to fifth grade.

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:**

Similar to Native students in reservation schools, these children disengaged when teachers emphasized verbal versus visual instruction; avoided competition and public performance; and were uneasy about demonstrating new skills without adequate practice. However, the children tended to adapt more readily, take more risks, and perform new skills more willingly in classrooms where teachers used cooperative learning practices. Surprisingly, the influence of a competitive or cooperative classroom could be mitigated by student actions. Native students with willing collaborators could find ways to learn cooperatively even in competitive classrooms. On the other hand, a preponderance of highly competitive non-Native students could interfere with practices in a cooperative classroom and thus impede Native students' progress. Native parents influenced their children's adaptation to school through the relative value they placed on education versus becoming a good person.

**Lee, O.** (2003). Equity for linguistically and culturally diverse students in science education: A research agenda. *Teachers College Record*, 105(3), 465-489.

**Literature Type:** Research review

**Summary:** This article presents a synthesis of major issues and research findings for effective classroom practices in multicultural science education. This includes how teachers articulate the relationship between traditional ways of knowing and Western science.

- ◆ Extensive recent research indicates that teachers from all backgrounds can provide effective instruction when they have an understanding of their students' linguistic and cultural experiences.
- ◆ Recent efforts to provide culturally congruent science instruction show that when culture and linguistic background are used as intellectual resources, students have increased science achievement. Several studies of Native students have demonstrated this.
- ◆ Instructional congruence focuses on emphasizing the role of instruction as teachers explore the relationship of academic disciplines with their students' cultural and linguistic knowledge and devise ways to link the two.
- ◆ Explicit instruction about the dominant culture's rules and norms are necessary, rather than expecting students to acquire them on their own. For example, the rules of scientific inquiry in which students are encouraged to ask questions and find answers on their

own are not necessarily known by students from non-Western cultures. “The aim is to encourage students to question and inquire without devaluing the norms and practices of their communities. Through progressing along a teacher-directive to student-exploratory continuum, teachers encourage students to take initiative and assume responsibility for their own learning.”

**Lipka, J.** (2002). *Schooling for self-determination: Research on the effects of including Native language and culture in the schools* [ERIC digest]. Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools. [www.ericdigests.org/2002-3/effects.htm](http://www.ericdigests.org/2002-3/effects.htm)

**Literature Type:** Research review

**Summary:** This digest briefly reviews the educational effects of assimilationist schooling and later efforts to create schools supportive of American Indian and Alaska Native self-determination. “Leaving local knowledge and language at the schoolhouse door was resulting in subtractive bilingualism; that is, many students were failing to attain academic competence in English while at the same time losing knowledge of their Indigenous languages and cultures” (p. 1). The digest then describes examples of tribal- or community-controlled programs that use students’ Native language as the language of instruction and incorporate traditional culture into the curriculum.

The digest explains that research conducted in Alaska with Yup’ik Eskimo students found that rural Yup’ik students outperformed students from an Alaskan regional center on a test of practical knowledge. Yup’ik elders, researchers, and teachers have demonstrated how to connect practical and cultural knowledge to a school’s math curriculum. For example, elders used the everyday practice of building a fish rack, a rectangular structure used to dry salmon, and connected this to the mathematical topics of perimeter, area, and physical proofs.

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:**

The sample of programs described in this report have met at least two of the following three criteria: (1) the program must involve community/tribally controlled schools; (2) the program must use the indigenous culture and language; (3) academic achievement must show a significant and measurable gain.

The four schools studied have this in common:

- ◆ Classes are taught in the Native language
- ◆ American Indian and Alaska Native students in all schools consistently scored higher than students who did not have classes taught in the Native language on tests of reading in English, mathematics taught in English, and language.

“In sum, the Navajo immersion [NI] students were gaining control of their own language at no loss to their knowledge of English while the English-only students were barely maintaining competence in English with great loss to their Native tongue. Further, the NI students greatly outscored the English-only students in math.”

**Powers, K., Potthoff, S.J., Bearinger, L.H., & Resnick, M.D.**

(2003). Does cultural programming improve educational outcomes for American Indian youth? *Journal of American Indian Education*, 42(2), 17-49.

**Literature Type:** Structural equation model (an advanced correlational analysis to explain complex relationships)

**Summary:** This study examined the influence of cultural programming on American Indian school outcomes. Ecological systems theory suggests that school learning is a result of multiple, complex transactions. Thus, the effects of cultural programming over and above other proven contributors to school success were analyzed. Structural equation modeling, which allows for the study of multiple variables and their interactions upon school outcomes was used to evaluate extant data collected from 240 urban American Indian youth. The results of this exploratory study indicated that cultural programming moderately, and largely indirectly, influences student outcomes. The strongest predictor of school success appeared to be the extent to which schools provide supportive personnel and safe and drug-free environments.

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:**

Elements of instructional programming include:

- ◆ Teaching Native stories and languages
- ◆ Avoiding content and instructional strategies that directly conflict with Native values

- ◆ Building on strengths and background knowledge of students
- ◆ Celebrating Native historical figures, contributions, and events
- ◆ The most striking finding was the large effect of school climate on educational outcomes. The extent to which students felt supported by teachers, and felt teachers were caring and approachable, contributed to their perception of school climate and is a strong predictor of student success.
- ◆ There are several limitations in this study including relying on self-reported data. Multiple sources of data such as direct observation, teacher interviews were not gathered.

**Sheets, R.H.** (1995). From remedial to gifted: Effects of culturally centered pedagogy. *Theory into Practice*, 34(3), 186-193.

**Literature Type:** Program description, with documented results.

**Summary:** Describes how five high school Native Spanish speakers, who previously were at risk for academic failure and could not read or write Spanish, were enrolled in a newly developed advanced Spanish class that focused on conversation through literature and culture rather than emphasis on reading and writing through grammar. While compensatory or basic remedial classes are the type of invention normally used for ELL students and students of color, this intervention demonstrates that students can excel and be considered “gifted” when they are pushed to achieve their potential, and have culturally relevant instruction.

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:**

A semester later, the students passed the Advanced Placement Spanish language exam, earning college credit; the following year they passed the AP Spanish literature exam, comparable to a third-year college course, and continued to excel at the “gifted level” in all classes. Indicators of success included:

- ◆ AP test results (all students passed with a 4 or 5)
- ◆ Development of ethnic identity and self-esteem
- ◆ Student-teacher relationships and student-student relationships



- ◆ Teaching strategies focused on small-group collaborative written work. Critical self-reflection, analysis, interpretation of literature, and higher order thinking skills were used. Basic skills were not taught in isolation.

The following factors led to the success of these students:

- ◆ Opportunity to take AP classes. None of the students had to “test gifted” to enroll. Moving from a compensatory model to a challenging, academically demanding model with high expectations.
- ◆ Equity of academic opportunities with equitable academic outcomes.
- ◆ Classes not connected with the LEP program.
- ◆ All classes taught in Spanish.
- ◆ Culturally centered pedagogy included use of Spanish language as medium of instruction, affirmation, and validation of ethnic identity, development of self-esteem, curricular content based on cultural heritage, and implementation of strategies based on learning styles.
- ◆ Bridging of home and school cultures.

**St. Charles, J., & Costantino, M.** (2000). *Reading and the Native American learner: Research report*. Olympia, WA: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Retrieved December 2, 2004, from [www.evergreen.edu/ecei/reports/RdgNALrner.txt](http://www.evergreen.edu/ecei/reports/RdgNALrner.txt)

**Literature Type:** Research review

**Summary:** This resource for mainstream teachers provides a summary of current research on effective ways for teachers to more fully meet the educational needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students. A short overview of some of the major points follows.

Two theories have wide acceptance among researchers for the lack of American Indian and other minority groups’ school achievement. They are the cultural difference theory and the macrostructural theory, in which “involuntary minorities” have greater difficulty in overcoming barriers to academic success because the barriers are seen as permanent and institutionalized discrimination. They also view education as providing few extrinsic rewards since barriers are seen as insurmountable, and Western education is viewed as detrimental to their own culture, language, and identity.

Research in the area of the cultural difference theory suggests that American Indians can feel a discontinuity between their own learning styles and the learning styles supported in typical U.S. classrooms. Teachers are encouraged to adapt their teaching style and methods of instruction so that all learning styles are supported. Classroom modifications include supplementing traditional forms

of instruction with cooperative learning strategies, providing multisensory instruction, and increasing the holistic emphasis in student learning.

Because American Indians speak dialects of English that are different from the standard English spoken by their non-Indian peers and teachers, teachers should make an effort to learn about the language and cultures of their American Indian students. This insight can help teachers recognize the sources of language discontinuity American Indian students bring with them from classroom English and can modify instruction accordingly.

Teachers should focus and increase the intrinsic motivation of students. This can include providing a multicultural curriculum, providing instruction sensitive to sociolinguistic differences and personal learning styles, contextualizing the instruction to capitalize on students' personal knowledge and experiences, giving students a choice in how and what they learn, connecting academics to real purposes valued by students, generating products for real audiences, and replacing passive teaching with active learning.

**Stickey, D.** (2003, February/March). *Cultural and academic excellence leaves no child behind*. T/TAC Link Lines, pp. 12-13. Williamsburg, VA: College of William and Mary, Training and Technical Assistance Center. Retrieved November 10, 2004, from [www.wm.edu/ttac/Newsletter/2003-febmar.pdf](http://www.wm.edu/ttac/Newsletter/2003-febmar.pdf)

**Literature Type:** Research review

**Summary:** Summarizes research studies that indicate teachers who teach in a culturally responsive manner—using cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective—can increase students' achievement.

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:**

- ◆ Research suggests that “test scores can be raised and students empowered when educators teach in a culturally responsive manner” (p. 12). Williams reviewed several projects that used language to improve student achievement on standardized tests. Students showed an increase in reading scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills after four months of instruction using the Bridge reading program. Other researchers cited in the review also found that using African American communication styles with students improved their literacy skills.
- ◆ The Rough Rock Demonstration School on the Navajo Reservation uses cultural content in the curriculum—oral narratives, Navajo symbols, and journal writing in both Navajo and English—which increased listening

comprehension scores by 60 percentage points over three years, and 12 percentage points on the locally developed criterion-referenced measures of reading comprehension. Reading scores doubled on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.

- ◆ The article also discussed using integration of cultural nuances in communication styles. One researcher indicated that integration of cultural nuances and acceptance of cultural communication styles in the classroom positively correlated with improvements of time on task, attending behaviors, participation in classroom dialogue, and recall of factual information with greater accuracy.
- ◆ Effective educators understand and use verbal and nonverbal communication styles of other cultures, such as storytelling by Hawaiian cultures, call and response by African Americans, and Latinos’ “talking along with speakers to show support for what is being said.”
- ◆ Teachers will benefit from researching a wide range of cultural norms relevant to their classrooms. They must also realize that students are at different stages of acculturation. “Lesson plans need to blend information on how students can become comfortable with American culture with ways that other students can become culturally responsive to members of diverse cultures.”
- ◆ Schools need to determine if culturally diverse students are overrepresented in special education.

**Waxman, H.C., & Tellez, K.** (2002). *Research synthesis on effective teaching practices for English language learners*. Philadelphia, PA: Mid-Atlantic Laboratory for Student Success. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED474821)

**Literature Type:** Research review

**Summary:** This is a synthesis of research from 1990 to 2002 on effective instructional strategies and methods found to have the most educational benefits and value to the greatest number of English language learners. Only empirical and rigorous research was included in the final synthesis because most were qualitative studies. Thirty-four articles were included in the final analysis, with eight experimental or quasi-experimental studies.

**Major Findings/Implications/Recommendations:**

Findings of the most effective teaching practices for improving education of ELL students include:

- ◆ Collaborative learning communities
- ◆ Multiple representations
- ◆ Building on prior knowledge
- ◆ Culturally responsive instruction
- ◆ Instructional conversation
- ◆ Cognitively guided instruction
- ◆ Technology-enriched instruction

## OTHER RESOURCES

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Lindsey, R.B., Robins, K.N., & Terrell, R.D. (2003). *Cultural proficiency: A manual for school leaders* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

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