

# PREPARING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHERS

## RETHINKING THE CURRICULUM

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*To successfully move the field of teacher education beyond the fragmented and superficial treatment of diversity that currently prevails, teacher educators must articulate a vision of teaching and learning in a diverse society and use that vision to systematically guide the infusion of multicultural issues throughout the preservice curriculum. A vision is offered of culturally responsive teachers that can serve as the starting point for conversations among teacher educators in this process. In this vision, culturally responsive teachers (a) are socioculturally conscious, (b) have affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, (c) see themselves as responsible for and capable of bringing about change to make schools more equitable, (d) understand how learners construct knowledge and are capable of promoting knowledge construction, (e) know about the lives of their students, and (f) design instruction that builds on what their students already know while stretching them beyond the familiar.*

The results of the 2000 Census show that the U.S. population is becoming increasingly diverse. This trend is especially salient in the K-12 student population. Currently, one of every three students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools is of a racial or ethnic minority background. One in five children younger than 18 lives in poverty. More than one in seven children between the ages of 5 and 17 speak a language other than English at home; more than one third of them are of limited English proficiency (Educational Research Service, 1995; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2000). This trend toward increasing diversity is expected to continue well into the 21st century. Clearly, preparing teachers to teach children of diverse racial, ethnic, social class, and language backgrounds is a pressing issue in teacher education today and will continue to be for some time to come.

The typical response of teacher education programs to the growing diversity among K-12 students has been to add a course or two on

multicultural education, bilingual education, or urban education but to leave the rest of the curriculum largely intact (Goodwin, 1997). Although such courses play an important role in preparing teachers for diversity, this approach to curriculum reform does not go far enough. Because added courses are often optional, students can complete their teacher education programs without receiving any preparation whatsoever in issues of diversity. Furthermore, unless the ideas introduced in the added courses are reinforced and expanded on in other courses, prospective teachers are not apt to embrace them as their own, particularly if those ideas clash with the views they bring into teacher education. Worse still, if the new ways of thinking are contradicted by courses comprising the "regular" curriculum, any positive effect of the added courses will likely wash out.

Some multicultural education advocates have argued for an infusion strategy whereby issues of diversity are addressed not only in specialized courses but throughout the entire

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teacher education curriculum (Grant, 1994; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). We find this comprehensive approach to curriculum reform appealing. However, there have been few discussions regarding what this infusion might entail and how best to accomplish it. We fear that in the absence of such discussions, many teacher education programs have interpreted infusion narrowly to mean the sprinkling of disparate bits of information about diversity into the established curriculum, resulting in the superficial treatment of multicultural issues. In this article, we contend that to successfully move beyond the fragmented and cursory treatment of diversity that currently prevails, teacher educators must first articulate a vision of teaching and learning within the diverse society we have become. They must then use that vision to systematically guide the infusion of multicultural issues throughout the teacher education curriculum. This infusion process requires that teacher educators critically examine the curriculum and revise it as needed to make issues of diversity central rather than peripheral. Below, we illustrate the coherent approach to infusion we advocate.

### **A CURRICULUM PROPOSAL FOR PREPARING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHERS**

Guiding our curriculum proposal is a vision of the culturally responsive teacher that is derived from our reading of a large body of empirical and conceptual literature, our observations in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, and our work with preservice teachers. In our view, six salient characteristics define the culturally responsive teacher. Such a teacher (a) is socioculturally conscious, that is, recognizes that there are multiple ways of perceiving reality and that these ways are influenced by one's location in the social order; (b) has affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, seeing resources for learning in all students rather than viewing differences as problems to be overcome; (c) sees himself or herself as both responsible for and capable of bringing about educational change that will make schools more responsive to all students;

(d) understands how learners construct knowledge and is capable of promoting learners' knowledge construction; (e) knows about the lives of his or her students; and (f) uses his or her knowledge about students' lives to design instruction that builds on what they already know while stretching them beyond the familiar. These six qualities constitute the central themes or strands that give conceptual coherence to the teacher education curriculum we envision. We use the metaphor of strands to highlight the interconnectedness of these themes. They are made up of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that, like the strands of thread in a piece of cloth, constantly intertwine and depend on one another to form a cohesive whole. We argue that they must be consciously and systematically woven throughout the learning experiences of prospective teachers in their coursework and fieldwork. Thus, they serve as the organizing framework guiding the infusion of attention to diversity throughout the teacher education curriculum.

Although we believe the six strands, which we discuss below (for a more detailed discussion of the strands, see Villegas & Lucas, in press), lay out the essential dispositions, knowledge, and skills for teaching in a culturally diverse society, we recognize that this is not the only way to conceptualize the curriculum for preparing culturally responsive teachers. Ultimately, the benefit that can be derived from a framework such as this depends on the extent to which those involved in preparing teachers at a given institution come to share the vision of culturally responsive teaching inherent in that framework. Such a vision cannot be imposed from the outside. It must grow out of the hard work of ongoing dialogue and negotiation among colleagues. Nevertheless, we believe our curriculum proposal provides a good starting point for the conversations that need to take place within each teacher education program.

#### ***Strand 1: Sociocultural Consciousness***

The initial strand in our curriculum proposal challenges future teachers to expand their

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sociocultural consciousness. By *sociocultural consciousness*, we mean an understanding that people's ways of thinking, behaving, and being are deeply influenced by such factors as race/ethnicity, social class, and language (Banks, 1996). Without this insight, teachers are unable to cross the sociocultural boundaries that separate too many of them from their students.

To understand their future students, prospective teachers must first examine their own sociocultural identities (Banks, 1991; Bennett, 1995; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Although some prospective teachers enter their teacher preparation programs with a strong sense of who they are socially and culturally, most need to engage in autobiographical exploration, reflection, and critical self-analysis to develop that sense. They need to explore the various social and cultural groups to which they belong, including those identified with race, ethnicity, social class, language, and gender. They also need to inspect the nature and extent of their attachments to those groups and how membership in them has shaped their personal and family histories.

Sociocultural consciousness further entails an understanding that differences in social location are not neutral. In all social systems, some positions are accorded greater status than others. With this status differentiation comes differential access to power. Because differences in access to power profoundly influence one's experience in the world, prospective teachers need to comprehend how American society is stratified, for example, along racial/ethnic, social class, and gender lines. They also need to understand that social inequalities are produced and perpetuated through systemic discrimination and justified through a societal ideology of merit, social mobility, and individual responsibility (Sturm & Guinier, 1996). They need to critically examine the role that schools play in this reproduction and legitimation process. Schools purport to offer unlimited possibilities for social advancement, but they simultaneously maintain structures that severely limit the probability of advancement for those at the bottom of the social scale (Labaree, 1997).

From childhood, we have been socialized to believe that schools are the great equalizers in

American society. We are told that schools "level the playing field," providing opportunity for all, regardless of social background, by serving as the impartial ground on which individuals freely prove their merit. One function of schools, then, is to sort students according to merit—which is equated with "talent" and "effort" (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Labaree, 1997; Oakes & Lipton, 1999). Those deemed meritorious are promised access to the higher status positions, whereas those found lacking in merit are told they must be content with the lower status positions because that is all they have earned. This ideological formulation, which is deeply ingrained in the everyday consciousness of most people in this country, validates social inequality by portraying it as a necessary device for motivating talented individuals to achieve high-status positions. It also justifies the existing social order by giving it normative dignity—that is, treating it as the natural order within a meritocracy in which some "deserve" more benefits due to their greater talent and effort. In this process, the system of domination is perpetuated.

But schools are far from being the impartial settings they are believed to be. Built into the fabric of schools are curricular, pedagogical, and evaluative practices that privilege the affluent, White, and male segments of society. The process through which we have been socialized into thinking that biased practices—such as instructional tracking—are impartial and natural has a powerful impact on our thinking. And, our belief in the meritocracy is further strengthened by the fact that some individuals from oppressed groups do manage to succeed academically despite the limited probability of their doing so. As a result, most people tend to explain academic success and failure on the basis of individual characteristics of the learner rather than institutionalized discrimination. Such explanations are offered by prospective teachers no less than by others (Davis, 1995).

In sum, to gain sociocultural consciousness, aspiring teachers must not only understand their own sociocultural identities but also come to recognize the intricate connection between schools and society. They must come to see that,

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as traditionally organized, schools help to reproduce existing social inequalities while giving the illusion that such inequalities are natural and fair. This will not be easy because in admitting that schools privilege some students—whether based on race, social class, gender, language group, or any other factor—prospective teachers begin to pull a thread that inevitably leads to the unraveling of their commonsense understanding of social stratification in the United States, a society that most have come to see as a meritocracy. Despite the discomfort involved, prospective teachers must be helped to recognize ways in which taken-for-granted notions regarding the legitimacy of the social order are flawed. If they do not come to see that the so-called meritocracy works largely for those who are already advantaged in society by virtue of their social class of origin and color of skin, for example, they will fail in their attempts to understand and respond to students who are socioculturally different from themselves, particularly when the students are from oppressed groups.

### ***Strand 2: An Affirming Attitude Toward Students From Culturally Diverse Backgrounds***

An affirming attitude toward students who differ from the dominant culture is the second fundamental orientation for teaching successfully in a culturally diverse society. Teachers who see their students in an affirming light acknowledge the existence and validity of a plurality of ways of thinking, talking, behaving, and learning. While recognizing that White, middle-class ways are most valued in society, affirming teachers understand that this status derives from the power of the White, middle-class group rather than from any inherent superiority in sociocultural attributes. Such teachers, therefore, make it a priority for their students to develop facility with the mainstream ways so that they can effectively function in society as it is now structured. However, they treat the necessity for such facility as serving an instrumental purpose for their students rather than reflecting the greater value of those ways

(Delpit, 1995; Hollins, 1982). They see all students, including children who are poor, of color, and speakers of languages other than English, as learners who already know a great deal and who have experiences, concepts, and languages that can be built on and expanded to help them learn even more. They see their role as adding to rather than replacing what students bring to learning. They are convinced that all students, not just those from the dominant group, are capable learners who bring a wealth of knowledge and experiences to school. As this implies, teachers with an affirming perspective are also socioculturally conscious.

Teachers' attitudes toward students significantly shape the expectations they hold for student learning, their treatment of students, and what students ultimately learn (Irvine, 1990; Pang & Sablan, 1998). Affirming attitudes, for example, have been shown to support student achievement (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lucas, Henze, & Donato, 1990; Nieto, 1996). Teachers who respect cultural differences are more apt to believe that students from nondominant groups are capable learners, even when these children enter school with ways of thinking, talking, and behaving that differ from the dominant cultural norms (Delpit, 1995). They convey this confidence in numerous ways, such as exposing students to an intellectually rigorous curriculum, teaching students strategies they can use to monitor their own learning, setting high performance expectations for students and consistently holding them accountable for meeting those expectations, encouraging students to excel, and building on the individual and cultural resources they bring to school. Strategies such as these, which convey respect for students and affirm their differences, become the basis for meaningful relationships between teachers and students and produce favorable academic results (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lucas et al., 1990).

Given the evidence, teachers-to-be must develop an affirming orientation toward student diversity. As a start, teacher educators can help aspiring teachers understand the consequences of teacher attitudes on student learning. But presenting and discussing the research



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on this topic, convincing as the evidence is, will not suffice. The more challenging tasks will be to motivate teacher candidates to inspect their own beliefs about students from nondominant groups and to confront negative attitudes they might have toward these students.

### ***Strand 3: Commitment and Skills to Act as Agents of Change***

The third strand in our curriculum proposal asks prospective teachers to develop the commitment and skills to act as agents of change. Like Fullan (1999), we see change agency as a moral imperative. Teachers are moral actors whose job is to facilitate the growth and development of other human beings. Students depend on teachers to have their best interests at heart and to make sound educational decisions. Teachers have the moral obligation to do all they can to fulfill these expectations and to do so for all children, not just for some (Goodlad, 1994; Tom, 1997). By actively working for greater equity in education, teachers can increase access to learning and educational success and can challenge the prevailing perception that differences among students are problems rather than resources.

Prospective teachers who learn to view themselves as agents of change see schools and society as interconnected. They believe that, although education has the potential to challenge and transform inequities in society, without intervention schools tend to reproduce those inequities by giving greater status to the ways of thinking, talking, and behaving of the dominant cultural group. Those with this perspective recognize that teaching is a complex activity that is inherently political and ethical. They are aware that institutional structures and practices do not exist in a vacuum but that people build and sustain them, whether consciously or unconsciously. They therefore believe that teachers must have a clear vision of their own roles as teachers and of the goals of education (Fullan, 1999). They also see teachers as participants in a larger struggle for social justice, whose actions either support or challenge

current inequalities (Cochran-Smith, 1991, 1997).

A host of factors work against teachers' becoming agents of change, including the hierarchical and bureaucratic nature of the educational system, time pressure, insufficient opportunities for collaboration with others, resistance by those in positions of power to equity-oriented change, lack of personal understanding of oppression and empathy for those who are oppressed, and despair that change is possible. To prepare prospective teachers to overcome these barriers, teacher educators must take steps to "deliberately socialize" them into the change agent role (Cochran-Smith, 1991, p. 285). In doing this, the challenge is to encourage both critique and hope in equal measure (Nieto, 1999). Although awareness of the pervasiveness and longevity of the inequities in schools and of the structures and practices that perpetuate them can be disheartening for prospective teachers, it is essential that they recognize these realities. If they see schools through the rose-colored glasses of the meritocratic myth, they will unwittingly perpetuate inequities. At the same time, if we promote awareness of these inequities without engendering an accompanying belief that schools can change, we will discourage the very people needed to teach the changing student population from becoming teachers at all.

Teachers need to believe that schools can be sites for social transformation even as they recognize that schools have typically served to maintain social inequities. They need to have faith in the ongoing project to fashion a democracy, acknowledging that there will be failures as well as successes along the way. They need "a fine sense of historical agency" (Apple, 1996, p. xviii) that allows them to see that schools have become more equitable over time and that change is a slow process. Thus, as teacher educators we must go beyond promoting awareness of the ways schools perpetuate social inequities and help aspiring teachers see that it is possible to reconstruct education to give all students opportunities to learn in academically rigorous ways.

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Teacher educators can prepare prospective teachers to become agents of change by teaching them about the change process, helping them understand the obstacles to change, helping them develop skills for collaboration and dealing with conflict, and providing evidence that schools can become more equitable. As important as these skills and knowledge are, they will likely remain dormant unless future teachers also develop the dispositions of change agents (Lucas, 2001). Teacher educators can cultivate those dispositions by emphasizing the moral dimension of education, guiding prospective teachers in developing their own personal vision of education and teaching, promoting the development of empathy for students of diverse backgrounds, nurturing their passion and idealism for making a difference in students' lives, and promoting activism outside as well as inside the classroom.

#### ***Strand 4: Constructivist Views of Learning***

We ground our vision of culturally responsive teaching in constructivist views of learning. From a constructivist perspective, learning is a process by which students generate meaning in response to new ideas and experiences they encounter in school. In this interpretive process, learners use their prior knowledge and beliefs—which they store in memory as mental structures (described variously by cognitive scientists as knowledge frameworks, schemata, mental models, and personal theories)—to make sense of the new input (Glaserfeld, 1995; Piaget, 1977). As this suggests, the knowledge children bring to school, derived from personal and cultural experiences, is central to their learning. To overlook this resource is to deny children access to the knowledge construction process. The conventional “empty vessel” metaphor of the learner yields to the image of a “builder” who is constantly striving to construct meaning. Similarly, the traditional belief that knowledge resides, intact, outside the learner gives way to an understanding that information that is external to the student

becomes knowledge for him or her only when he or she gives meaning to it.

To support students' construction of knowledge, teachers must help learners build bridges between what they already know and believe about the topic at hand and the new ideas and experiences to which they are exposed. This involves engaging students in questioning, interpreting, and analyzing information in the context of problems or issues that are interesting and meaningful to them. Because students bring different knowledge frameworks to learning, they will not necessarily construct the same understandings of any given topic. Teachers therefore must consciously monitor the students' developing understanding of new ideas. Given the diversity in students' backgrounds and the complex nature of the knowledge construction process, teachers need to continuously adjust their plans of action to meet students' needs while simultaneously building on their strengths. Clearly, teaching cannot be reduced to a rigid prescription that, if faithfully followed, automatically results in student learning. On the contrary, it demands thoughtful decision making in situations that are ever changing and characterized by uncertainty (Oakes & Lipton, 1999).

We anchor our curriculum proposal in constructivist views of learning for reasons we want to make explicit. First, from a constructivist perspective, all students are depicted as capable learners who continuously strive to make sense of new ideas. Their ways of speaking and thinking are considered resources for further development rather than problems to be remedied. By acknowledging that diversity plays a central role in learning, constructivism places a responsibility on educators to adjust standard school practices to the diverse backgrounds of their students. Second, in contrast to the hierarchical and authoritarian tendencies of transmission-oriented teaching, constructivist teaching promotes critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, and the recognition of multiple perspectives. It is thus well suited for preparing students to become active participants in a democracy, a goal we support. Third, by emphasizing higher order thinking and

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problem solving, constructivist classrooms promote academic rigor to a greater extent than transmission classrooms, which rely largely on recall of information.

Although we strongly support constructivist views, we do not mean to suggest that there is no place in schools for direct instruction or for memorization and practice. Students need to develop facility with the dominant forms and uses of literacy so they can decide when, whether, and how to use those conventions. They need to learn mathematical and scientific principles and procedures in order to apply them in novel and personally relevant ways or, for that matter, to challenge them. However, we are questioning the misguided assumption that students must learn “the basics” through direct instruction, drill, and memorization before they can engage in more academically demanding learning activities. This assumption belies a blindness to the knowledge, skills, and experiences that some students bring to learning and too often denies poor students and students of color a rigorous education (Rosebery, McIntyre, & Gonzalez, 2001). It can easily lead to their disengagement from school.

Unless prospective teachers experience the knowledge construction process as learners, they are not likely to adopt constructivist views of education or use constructivist strategies in their own teaching (Feiman-Nemser & Melnick, 1992). For example, teachers-to-be who as learners were not provided frequent opportunities to interpret ideas, solve problems, explain solutions, defend explanations, and refute arguments will probably not engage their future students in these types of exchange either. Teacher educators, therefore, must model constructivist practices for their students. Simply telling future teachers about the merits of constructivist approaches will not produce the desired results.

### ***Strand 5: Learning About Students***

If teaching involves assisting students to build bridges between their preexisting knowledge and experiences and the new material they

are expected to learn, then teachers must know not only the subject matter they teach but also their students.

To engage students in the construction of knowledge, teachers need to know about students’ experiences outside school. For example, teachers who are knowledgeable about their students’ family lives are better prepared to understand the children’s in-school behavior and to incorporate into classroom activities the “funds of knowledge” those families possess (Moll & Gonzalez, 1997). Similarly, teachers who know about their students’ hobbies and favorite activities as well as what they excel at outside school can systematically tie the children’s interests, concerns, and strengths into their teaching, thereby enhancing their motivation to learn (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Teachers also need insight into how their students’ past learning experiences have shaped their current views of school and school knowledge. For instance, children who have been taught subject matter as discrete bits of information that bear little or no relationship to the world beyond the school walls are likely to see school knowledge as boring, alien to their lives, and devoid of personal meaning. These perceptions are particularly problematic for children from historically oppressed groups. Although they might be told that doing well in school will ultimately bring tangible social and economic rewards, these young people are not apt to believe it because they generally know few adults for whom school has served as a path to a better life. Seeing no value in school knowledge for themselves, these students might become resistant to learning.

Teachers also benefit from knowing about their students’ experiences outside school with reading, writing, mathematics, science, music, art, and other school subjects. Such insight enables teachers to draw on those experiences to represent school knowledge to their students meaningfully and embed learning activities in contexts that are familiar to them (Feiman-Nemser & Melnick, 1992; Moll & Gonzalez, 1997).

In highlighting these aspects of children’s lives, we do not mean to suggest that this is all

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teachers need to know about their students to design instruction that is relevant and meaningful to them. Our point is that responsive teachers strive to know as much as possible about the children they teach to facilitate their learning. But even when they are highly knowledgeable about their students, teachers may not be able to make productive use of what they know without some frameworks for interpreting this information—frameworks that come largely from a grounding in academic disciplines during their undergraduate education. From history courses, for example, prospective teachers need to learn about the enslavement, conquest, and colonization of people of color as well as their ongoing struggle for liberation. Exposure to the literature of different groups can give future teachers access to the rich texture of people's lives—their hopes, aspirations, dreams, disappointments, pains, and joys. From sociolinguistics courses, they can learn that all varieties of language are complex and governed by rules. Courses in anthropology can reinforce the fact that, although discernable patterns for cultural groups exist, culture is dynamic and varies among individuals within a group and across communities within a larger cultural group.

Indeed, because individual differences exist within any single group and because culture is constantly evolving as it adapts to changing social, economic, political, and environmental conditions, it is impossible for prospective teachers to learn enough about their future students while in programs of preservice preparation. Such programs, however, should help prospective teachers develop facility with various strategies for learning about students that they can later use in the specific settings in which they teach (Villegas, 1991). These strategies include conducting home visits and consulting with people who live in the communities served by the school in addition to the children's parents or guardians. Prospective teachers also need to learn how they can create opportunities in the classroom for students to discuss their goals and aspirations for the future, the role they see schools playing in bringing these plans to fruition, what they value and find interesting about the different school subjects, and what

they think about the school curriculum. To discover what their future students know and think about different instructional topics and how they use these frameworks to make sense of new ideas, prospective teachers need to gain practice with such strategies as engaging students in substantive conversations that elicit their understandings of concepts relevant to specific instructional topics, posing problems for students to solve and observing how they go about solving them and asking students to explain the reasoning they used to solve problems.

### ***Strand 6: Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices***

Culturally responsive teachers not only know their students well, they use what they know about their students to give them access to learning. This ability to put to pedagogical use their understanding of how students learn and their knowledge of the particular students in their classes is the last strand in our curriculum proposal. It is beyond the scope of this article to present a comprehensive picture of culturally responsive teaching practices. Such practices include involving all students in the construction of knowledge, building on students' personal and cultural strengths, helping students examine the curriculum from multiple perspectives, using varied assessment practices that promote learning, and making the culture of the classroom inclusive of all students. Below, we give examples of some of these practices (for a fuller discussion of culturally responsive teaching practices, see Villegas & Lucas, in press).

Before presenting the examples, however, we want to make it clear that being a culturally responsive teacher is not simply a matter of applying instructional techniques, nor is it primarily a matter of tailoring instruction to incorporate assumed traits or customs of particular cultural groups. As we have discussed, culturally responsive teachers have a high degree of sociocultural consciousness, hold affirming views of students of diverse backgrounds, see themselves as agents of change, understand and



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embrace constructivist views of learning and teaching, and know the students in their classes. It is the combination of all these dispositions, knowledge, and skills that enables them to design instruction that facilitates student learning.

A central task of teachers who are culturally responsive is to create a classroom environment in which all students are encouraged to make sense of new ideas—that is, to construct knowledge that helps them better understand the world—rather than merely to memorize predigested information. One way teachers can support students' construction of knowledge is by involving them in inquiry projects that have personal meaning to them. Rosebery, Warren, and Conant (1992) provided a good example of this practice in a junior high school science class for Haitian students in Massachusetts. Most of the students in this class believed that the water from the school's third-floor fountains tasted better than the water from the first-floor fountains. As they put it, the younger children—whose classrooms were located on the first floor—"slobber" when they drink water, thereby making it taste bad. Seeing the students' interest in this topic as an opportunity to involve them in "doing" science, the teacher encouraged the class to design and conduct a blind taste test of water taken from several fountains. Like scientists in laboratories, the students posed questions, devised ways of testing their hypotheses, collected and analyzed data, reconciled contradictory data, and generated explanations. By embedding learning in a meaningful activity on a topic of interest to the students, the teacher provided them a strong motive to learn. Instruction designed along these lines implicitly teaches students that concepts and ideas are phenomena to be generated and understood, not merely facts to be memorized. This type of instruction—which engages students actively in purposeful, meaningful, collaborative, and intellectually rigorous work—also conveys to children that they are capable thinkers who can create new ideas, even if, like the students in the example, they are not fully fluent in academic English. Students who

are treated in this manner tend to push themselves to meet the teacher's expectations.

The second example, taken from work by Moll and Diaz (1987), also shows that when students are given opportunities to explore topics of interest to them, they are more apt to engage in learning than when instructional topics have little relevance to their lives. The action research project from which the example is drawn was carried out in a San Diego community with a large concentration of Latinos at a time when an English-only policy was being publicly debated in California. The teacher—who knew that residents of the community, including her students, were highly interested in the topic of bilingualism—asked the students to survey the views of community members on this topic. As part of this writing module, the students were expected to develop a questionnaire, administer the questionnaire to several community members, and prepare a report of findings. The objective of ascertaining the community members' opinions gave purpose to all the writing connected with this module. Because the students were curious to find out the different views on bilingualism held in the community, they became fully engaged in the various writing activities. Students who had previously been considered incapable of writing in English were sufficiently motivated to produce essays in their second language. The key to the success of this module, according to Moll and Diaz, was the opportunity it gave the students to engage in purposeful writing on a topic of interest to them and of relevance to their community.

Culturally responsive teachers also promote candid discussions about topics that, although relevant to the lives of the students, are regularly excluded from classroom conversations. For example, the teachers who participated in a study conducted by Ladson-Billings and Henry (1990) openly discussed with their students issues related to drug use and teenage sex. As these researchers reported, instead of offering moral pronouncements, the teachers helped the students to examine why such conditions existed in their communities. In so doing, the instructors validated the students' experiences. At the same time, they made those experiences

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problematic and an appropriate subject for critical inspection.

Teachers who are culturally responsive use pertinent examples and analogies from learners' lives to introduce or clarify new concepts (Banks, 1996; Irvine, 1992). For example, one of us recently observed a student teacher successfully introducing the concept of rhythm in poetry to African American and Latino students in an urban middle school by drawing on the students' familiarity with rhythm in rap music. She began the lesson by playing a selection of rap music that the children knew well, followed by a discussion of rhythm in that particular music selection. She then guided the students through a similar analysis of rhythm in a poem by Robert Frost, drawing parallels between the use of rhythm in rap and in poetry. In exploring the analogy between the two poetic forms, this young teacher transformed the subject matter into an educational experience that was relevant to her students.

Another strategy that culturally responsive teachers can use to help students build bridges between school learning and their lives outside school is drawing on the expertise of community members, including the children's parents. For instance, when teaching about immigration in the United States, a New York City teacher we know invited the parents of several children in her class who had immigrated to this country to share their immigrant experiences with the students. In doing this, the teacher not only strengthened the connections between home and school but also conveyed to the children that their families have knowledge and experiences the school values.

Although culturally responsive teachers stretch students beyond what is familiar to them, they also find ways of incorporating into their teaching cultural patterns that are known to the children from their home and community experiences. Marva Collins, a highly acclaimed teacher of African American students, illustrates this strategy clearly. Collins's teaching was documented by Hollins (1982), on whose work we draw. According to Hollins, Ms. Collins often corrected her students' grammar, thereby signaling to them the importance in U.S. society

of mastering standard English. However, she also encouraged the use of community language patterns in the classroom. For example, analogical comparisons often used in traditional African American speech were evident in Ms. Collins's teaching. Jive talking, based on improvisation with language, was accepted as a viable means of communication in her classroom. Interaction patterns commonly found in the African American church—including choral reading, audience participation, and use of analogies—were also used frequently. Hollins concluded that Marva Collins's teaching success was due, in large part, to her ability to make learning culturally relevant to the students.

Culturally responsive teachers also help students interrogate the curriculum critically by having them address inaccuracies, omissions, and distortions in the text and by broadening it to include multiple perspectives (Banks, 1991, 1996; Cochran-Smith, 1997). Crichlow, Goodwin, Shakes, and Swartz (1990) illustrated one approach teachers can use to help students examine the curriculum critically. They described a discussion in a seventh-grade class during which the teacher was working with her students to expand the traditional historical narrative. One portion of this conversation centered around a sentence from the social studies text, which stated the following: "When Washington was elected president, only men who owned property or were wealthy could vote." Although truthful, this statement glosses over important ideas that the teacher did not want the students to overlook. Through a series of questions, the instructor helped the students make the sentence more accurate by adding that it was only White men who were able to vote. The teacher also had the class explicitly name those who did not have voting privilege at the time—poor White men, enslaved Black people, free Black people, and women. According to Crichlow et al., by helping the students distinguish between truth and accuracy, this teacher broadened the text to include voices that were clearly missing, thereby expanding the students' ways of thinking about the topic.

As the above examples suggest, the job of culturally responsive teachers is demanding and

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complex. It would be unrealistic to expect teachers-to-be to develop the extensive and sophisticated pedagogical knowledge and skills of culturally responsive teachers during their preservice preparation. Such knowledge and skills develop only with experience. It is realistic, however, to expect prospective teachers to come away from their preservice teacher education programs with a vision of what culturally responsive teaching entails and an understanding of what culturally responsive teachers do. They could also be expected to demonstrate an initial ability to tailor their teaching to particular students within particular contexts, a central quality of culturally responsive teaching. To develop these understandings and abilities, prospective teachers need exposure to culturally responsive teachers—by reading about them, analyzing teaching cases featuring them, and watching them in action. They also need practice in diverse classrooms themselves with feedback from experienced responsive teachers. Such practice is most productive when it is accompanied by guided reflection.

## CONCLUSION

In this article, we have argued that to prepare teachers in a multicultural society, those responsible for preparing them must first articulate a vision of teaching and learning in a diverse society. This vision, we think, is needed to give conceptual coherence to the preparation of teachers for diversity. The image we have advanced is that of a culturally responsive teacher, defined by six salient characteristics. These six qualities serve as the organizing framework for infusing attention to diversity throughout the teacher education curriculum. They represent the conceptual strands to be woven throughout the learning experiences of preservice teachers in coursework and fieldwork so that, collectively, those experiences cultivate the qualities of culturally responsive teachers.

We do not intend our curriculum proposal to be prescriptive. All of us involved in the education of teachers at our institutions must engage in dialogue to develop a collective vision of

teaching and learning in a multicultural society. We need to examine and revise the curriculum in light of that vision. We need to spend time coordinating the desired responsive teaching qualities with the courses we teach and the field experiences we offer. We need professional development that will help us model the responsive teaching qualities reflected in the revised curriculum. As this suggests, articulating the vision is only the first step; weaving the vision throughout the teacher education curriculum and developing the local capacity to implement that curriculum are ongoing and collaborative processes. The organizing framework we propose in this article can render this complex task more manageable.

Change, however, does not occur in a vacuum. The framework for preparing culturally responsive teachers we propose will need to be negotiated within the current social and political context. A central feature of this context is concern for accountability, as evident in the increasing emphasis on standards for teachers and teacher education developed by professional organizations and government agencies. The viability of our proposal depends not on whether standards exist but on their substance. Our framework is grounded in the beliefs that a salient role of schools is to promote a more equitable and just society and that diversity is worthy of affirmation. It is therefore compatible with accountability systems that give serious attention to principles of access, equity, and diversity in education. Most professional organizations and government agencies that have developed standards for the preparation of teachers do in fact address these principles in their standards. Our proposal offers an opportunity to test the sincerity of their commitment.

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