

APPENDIX V – 136



TO: Lorenzo Lopez, Jr., Director  
Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Instruction  
Tucson Unified School District

FROM: Christine Sleeter, Chair  
National Panel on Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Instruction

RE: Activities during 2015-2016 school year

DATE: April 30, 2016

Members of the National Panel on Culturally Responsive Curriculum include: Anthony Brown, Patricia Gándara, Kris Gutierrez, Jackie Jordan Irvine, Luis Moll, Ernest Morrell, and Christine Sleeter. During the 2015-2016, the panel engaged in the following activities, in consultation with you and your teachers:

1. In October, Dr. Sleeter flew to Tucson, where she spent a day with you and some of the teachers, working out a plan for panel activities.
2. The panel members examined curriculum maps, syllabi, and lessons plans that have been developed for use in the Culturally Relevant courses in grades 11 and 12. Panel members discussed this work in phone conferences on December 9 and January 11. For the most part, we found the curriculum maps and syllabi offering more information about class procedures than class content. So, virtual meetings were organized between teachers and the panel.
3. Panelists participated in two virtual meetings via Google Hangouts with the teachers on January 20 and February 24, 2016. Although the sound quality in these discussions was problematic, the content was rich. For example, on January 20, ideas that emerged were that the courses try to develop students' voice through helping them to see connections between themselves and their realities, and literary works and historical events. The teachers intentionally aim toward developing in students a sense of empowerment, critical thinking, students taking ownership of their own learning, students becoming knowledge creators, and students learning to develop research-based solutions for problems they encounter in their own lives and communities in order to become designers of their own futures. Literacy and critical literacy development is a huge part of this process. On February 24, we had a robust discussion of community action projects, as well as the importance of students' primary language. In both meetings, teachers asked for input in several areas, particularly related to African American content. Based on their requests, panel

members offered feedback and suggestions, particularly for courses from African American viewpoints. For example, Dr. Morrell sent a recommended list of African American literature for youth, and Dr. Brown sent material for use in African American history.

4. At AERA in Washington, DC, on April 11, Dr. Irvine, Dr. Hawley, and Dr. Brown met with the six teachers who attended the American Educational Research Association, to discuss their work with culturally relevant pedagogy. There was a good mix of teaching experience, ethnic/cultural background, content expertise, and gender. The discussion, which was very productive, focused on culturally relevant pedagogy, using examples from both the African American and Latino communities. Teachers discussed their challenges, such as inadequate time to prepare to teach the courses, resistance from colleagues, and how the curriculum can be sustained and grow in the future.
5. Ethnic studies in Tucson was featured at the American Educational Research Association in an invited symposium entitled "Public Scholarship and the Ethnic Studies Revival in Tucson and Beyond," on April 9. Representing Tucson were yourself, Nolan Cabrera, and Luis Moll; other members of the symposium included Dr. Jackie Irvine, Dr. Gándara, Dr. Roderick Daus-Magbual from San Francisco, and myself. About 200 AERA participants attended the symposium. In a unique feature, attendees could participate by texting comments and questions that were displayed on a screen. There were 99 comments, such as: "Bourgeois ideology is hegemonic but with focused training, teachers can become facilitators of liberatory knowledge with students and communities;" "I really feel like pedagogic practice or praxis is a cornerstone of making ethnic studies a sustainable, rigorous, and enjoyable course;" "Is there a move to have ethnic studies in ECE and elementary classrooms?" "Much promise for ethnomathematics;" "No programs exist currently in RI. Youth have fought for it and are now working w/ Providence admin to develop;" "Native studies at northern Michigan univ applies indigenous methodologies to environmental studies - great way to connect ES and STEM;" and "Bilingual ed teachers need to organize in support of ethnic studies. It counts as part of a community-wide social movement."

It would be beneficial to continue the work of the National Panel in collaboration with Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Instruction. Suggested work for the coming year includes the following:

1. Continued curriculum development, including more detailed syllabi for the Culturally Relevant courses that would provide guidance to teachers who are new to teaching these courses. It appears that new teachers receive support and curricular ideas to work with, but also that they would benefit from having access to much more detailed and explicit "model syllabi" than exist currently. The National Panel can give input and feedback as needed on model syllabi.

2. One on one virtual meetings between teachers and members of the National Panel. The sound quality of Google Hangouts proved difficult, despite the richness of conversations between the teachers and members of the National Panel. This next year, we can try one on one meetings in which the Office of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Instruction identifies individual teachers who would like to talk with specific National Panel members about their pedagogy. Teachers would video their teaching ahead of time for the Panelist to view as the basis for discussion. Logistics regarding when and how the conversation takes place can be worked out between the two people, who will then be asked to share the outcome briefly with Christine and Lorenzo so they can judge the usefulness of this format.
3. Culturally responsive pedagogy engages teachers with students in co-constructing some of what happens in a course, on an ongoing basis. Asking students for their input and feedback on one's class may be new for some of the teachers. The Office of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Instruction, with input from the National Panel as needed, will help the teachers figure out and implement a system for involving their students on a regular basis in giving feedback and input into their Culturally Relevant classes.
4. The Office of Culturally Responsive Curriculum and Instruction, with input from the National Panel as needed, will work with the University of Arizona to explore, and if possible develop, a plan for growing their own teachers. Finding teachers with a background in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Instruction poses a challenge. Those who have experienced the courses as high school students in Tucson will have a degree of preparation that other beginning teachers may not have. It would be beneficial to work with the University to develop a path through university work and teacher preparation, so that many of the program's graduates can return to the District as classroom teachers.
5. Teachers who are new to teaching Culturally Relevant courses may not have deep content knowledge in the course(s) they are assigned to teach. For each course, the Office of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Instruction will work with the National Panel to develop a reading list that teachers will be expected to use to deepen their own content knowledge.