English Language Learners and Culturally Responsive Teaching

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Professional learning for culturally responsive teaching has the potential to address achievement gaps across ethnic groups and disproportionate representation in special education for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This brief has a twofold purpose: (a) to demonstrate the need for rethinking current approaches to professional learning and (b) to provide guidelines for professional learning for culturally responsive teaching, as well as research-supported examples of schools and districts engaged in this process.

NCCREST has generated a set of principles to guide culturally responsive professional learning. The principles were influenced by research from the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE), the research of McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) with teacher learning communities around the nation, and the work of the National Staff Development Council.

NCCREST’S PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING TO PREPARE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHERS

NCCREST’s professional learning principles are described below:

PRINCIPLE 1: Professional Learning is focused on improving learning within a diverse, multicultural community. The outcomes, content, and activities of any professional learning activity must be grounded in the multicultural context that characterizes most contemporary urban communities.

PRINCIPLE 2: Professional Learning engages educators in joint, productive activity through discourse, inquiry, and public professional practice. Effective professional learning is reached by continuous, collaborative interaction with colleagues through discussion, knowledge development and understanding, and directed inquiry around professional practice.

PRINCIPLE 3: Professional Learning is a facet of daily living, not a compartmentalized activity. Since professional learning is embedded within practice, it becomes part of daily discourse, shared discussions about student learning and student products, as well as more formalized mentoring and coaching, meetings, study groups, and examination of evidence from inquiry cycles.
PRINCIPLE 4: Professional Learning results in improved learning for students who have been marginalized from the academic and social curricula of the U. S. public school system. Professional learning provides opportunities for teachers to explore and understand the influence of individual cultural identity and values on individual and systems practices, as well as expand their professional knowledge of the sociocultural dimensions of learning, and its impact assessed through student involvement and performance in academic and social curricula.

PRINCIPLE 5: Professional Learning influences decisions about what is taught and why. Since professional learning is generative, educators’ knowledge will expand and become more complex as it develops. It is expected that professional learning will result in the use of a cultural perspective in the examination and improvements to the content and process of instruction for all learners.

PRINCIPLE 6: Professional Learning focuses on the diffusion of professional knowledge to build sustainable educational communities focused on improving learning outcomes for all students and their families, particularly those students who are members of cultural and linguistic minorities. As educators gain knowledge, they also have the responsibility for sharing and mentoring others both in the practice of professional learning and in the expanded knowledge that comes from such activity (Kozleski, 2005, p. 7).

Reaction Questions:

1. In your view, what is meant by professional learning for culturally responsive teaching? Please give some examples.

2. Why is professional learning for culturally responsive teaching important to your stakeholders?

3. From your viewpoint, why is it important that professional learning is focused on outcomes, content, and activities within a diverse multicultural community?

4. What do you see as the intended outcome of professional learning for culturally responsive teaching?

5. Do you believe that professional learning for culturally responsive teaching is being implemented well in your school/district/state? Please give some examples from your experience.

6. From your experiences, do you believe there are implications for what is taught and why as a result of professional learning in your school/district/state?
**Application Questions:**

1. What guidelines might be used within your school/district/state to address professional learning for culturally responsive teaching?

2. What type of training or professional development might be necessary to assist education personnel and families in understanding, assessing, and addressing culturally responsive teaching?

3. Who are the school personnel who need to be involved in decision-making relative to professional learning for culturally responsive teaching? What are the areas of expertise (knowledge and skills) that these persons will need in order to effectively implement culturally responsive teaching?

4. What are the necessary considerations and/or conditions for developing a culturally responsive training curriculum?

5. What teaching modalities best contribute to actualizing professional learning for culturally responsive teaching?

6. In what ways can the school/district/state determine if they are implementing professional learning for culturally responsive teaching in an effective and efficient manner?

These questions were developed by the following stakeholders working together within the IDEA Partnership:

- Role: Family Member  
  Location: California

- Role: Higher Education  
  Location: California

- Role: Special Education Teacher  
  Location: California

- Role: General Education Administrator  
  Location: Illinois
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