Culturally Relevant Educational Systems: Their Relationship to Native American Student Achievement

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CULTURALLY RELEVANT EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS:
THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO NATIVE AMERICAN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Grand Forks, North Dakota
May
2011

This dissertation, submitted by Michelle K. Greseth in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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Dean of the Graduate School

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Date

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PERMISSION

Title   Culturally Relevant Educational Systems: Their Relationship to Native
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Department   Educational Leadership

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of this dissertation and research project would not have been possible without the help of many. First, I must thank God for giving me strength when things got tough and a spirit of perseverance when I needed to keep pressing on. I would like to thank the professors and colleagues I have met along my journey who have provided insights and opportunities to learn about all aspects of education. The wisdoms gained from these opportunities will continue to guide me through my educational career and will impact the decisions and choices I make as I continue on my journey.

I must give a huge thanks to Dr. Brenda Kallio for her guidance and assistance as I navigated over, around, and through the many obstacles I faced to get this far. Because she came to UND after I had completed my coursework, I never got to know her as a professor, so we had to get to know one another mostly long distance via emails and telephone. Somehow, she began to understand the kind of encouragement and support that I needed and had the patience and perseverance to keep getting me back on track.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. Thank you to my mother, Susie, who never stopped believing in me and to my sisters, Jeri, Bella, and Sabrina, who probably did stop believing but encouraged me anyway. We finally made the "Three Doctor G's!" Thank you to all my in-laws who offered many kind words and sometimes babysitting to help me accomplish this task. The support from my husband and kids has been tremendous. Thank you to my husband, Lee, and my boys, Jackson and Levi, for putting

up with me and sometimes making their way without me. Because of you, I have been able to realize a dream. I hope that I can now return the favor for each of you as you pursue your dreams in life.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was twofold. The first purpose was to analyze the level of culturally responsive practices of South Dakota elementary schools with significant populations of Native American students. A survey was given to 34 elementary school counselors, each of whom served public elementary schools in South Dakota with a significant number of Native American students, to determine the cultural responsiveness of each participating school. Scores were determined in each of five domains to show the level of cultural responsiveness in each domain. Weighted risk ratios were calculated from demographic da to determine the participation rate of Native American students in special education pi gran.. in each of the participating schools.

The second purpose of this study was to determine how these culturally responsive practices relate to Native American student achievement and representation in special education services. The scores for each domain taken from the survey were compared with the achievement scores in math and reading and the attendance rates for Native American students in each of the participating schools. This was done to see how culturally responsive educational systems impact student achievement and participation in special education programs.

Based on the data collected, the researcher found that culturally responsive educational systems do not improve Native American student achievement in math and reading nor do they improve student attendance rates. The demographic data indicated

that Native American students are still over-represented in special education programs in South Dakota public schools.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Public schools today are facing a general decline in enrollment in part because the

White population, which makes up 75 to 80% of the total population, is having fewer

children (Garfield, Garfield, & Willardson, 2003). According to Garfield et al. (2003),

the number of minority students, in contrast, is on the rise. In both California and Texas,

more than half the student populations in public schools are minorities. In fact, the 25

largest school districts in the United States have "minority majorities" (p. 12).

In South Dakota, White students still make up 80% of the student population in

public schools (South Dakota Department of Education, 2009a). Just like the national

trend, however, the White population is declining while the minority population is on the

rise. Over the last three years, the percentage of White students in South Dakota's public

schools has decreased from 101,810 to 99,333 (South Dakota Department of Education,

2006a, 2009a). During that same time period, the minority population in South Dakota's

public schools has increased from 18,468 to 22,791 (South Dakota Department of

Education, 2006a, 2009a). The population of the largest minority group in South Dakota,

the Native American students, increased from 12,650 in 2006 to 14,546 in 2009, a 15%

increase over just 3 years (South Dakota Department of Education, 2006a, 2009a).

Coinciding with the population diversification in our nation's schools and in

South Dakota schools, there are differences in the levels of academic achievement among

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the racial and ethnic groups. The achievement gaps have remained constant over the past three decades, and in some cases have widened slightly. There are still significant achievement gaps, particularly between the less advantaged groups such as African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans and the more advantaged groups such as Whites and Asian Americans (U.S. Department of Education, 2007 & 2009). The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) Mathematics Assessment Tests from 2009 show that among 4th graders in South Dakota, African American students had an average score that was 22 points lower than that of White students, Hispanic students had an average score that was 13 points lower than that of White students, and Native American students had an average score that was 27 points lower than that of White students (U. S. Department of Education, 2009). Similarly, the NAEP Reading Assessment Tests from 2007 show that among 4th graders in South Dakota, Hispanic students had an average score that was 19 points lower than that of White students, and Native American students had an average score that was 32 points lower than that of White students. The data were not reported for African American students in 2007 because reporting standards were not met (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

South Dakota students in grades three through eight and 11 take the Dakota STEP test as a measure of achievement. In 2006, the percentage of White students who tested proficient or advanced in mathematics was 77% compared to 42% for Native American students. The percentage of White students testing proficient or advanced in reading was 86% compared to 59% for Native American students (South Dakota Department of Education, 2006b).

On the 2009 NCLB Report Card for South Dakota, the achievement gap has remained and in several areas it has widened. In 2009, the percent of White students testing proficient or advanced in math was 80% while only 44% of Native Americans tested in the proficient or advanced categories. Similarly, 80% of White students tested proficient or advanced in reading in 2009 compared to 50% of the Native American students testing above basic (South Dakota Department of Education, 2009b).

The graduation rate also shows a significant gap. In 2009, the graduation rate for White students from public schools in South Dakota was 91.98% while the graduation rate for Native American students from public schools in South Dakota was 66.2% (South Dakota Department of Education, 2009b).

These gaps in academic achievement and graduation rates for minority students also coincide with larger numbers of minority students being served in special education. Nationally, minority students are disproportionately over-represented in the categories of Mental Retardation (MR), Emotional Disturbance (ED), Specific Learning Disability (SLD), and Speech/Language Impairment (SLI) (Harry & Klingner, 2006). These are the high-incidence categories and also the categories where students are placed based on the "judgment" of school personnel rather than a medical diagnosis. The "judgment" labels are the categories that depend on clinical judgment instead of medically supportable data which identifies the low-incidence categories of Multiple Disabilities, Hearing Impairment, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Visual Impairment, Autism, Traumatic Brain Injury, Deaf-Blind, and Developmental Delay (Harry & Klingner, 2006).

The low-incidence categories show no evidence of over-representation based on ethnicity (Donovan & Cross, 2002). As Donovan and Cross (2002) noted in their report,

> One of the reasons these [low-incidence] categories are not monitored by OCR is that for most of the disabilities represented, few would question the professional judgment or accuracy of a diagnosis in these cases. Moreover, the representation of racial/ethnic groups in these categories has not been at issue in the courts. (pp. 54-55)

The accuracy of professional judgments in diagnosing Mental Retardation, Learning Disabled, and Emotional Disturbance has been questioned and tried in the courts (Harry & Klingner, 2006). The most famous case is that of *Larry P. v. Riles* (1979). In this case, the court stated that the IQ tests that were used to identify children as eligible for the special education category of Educable Mental Retardation (EMR) were biased against African Americans (Harry & Klingner, 2006). Some may argue that this eligibility determination is not a problem but rather a benefit because the students would receive additional support and resources. However, if bias is evident in the pre-referral and referral stages for special education, then it must be seen as a problem (Klingner et al., 2005).

Because there continues to be overrepresentation of minority students in the eligibility categories which require a judgment call by school personnel, South Dakota school districts are being monitored for the numbers of students per ethnic group served in each of the special education categories. Personnel from the Office Special Education Programs at the South Dakota Department of Education began calculating Weighted Risk Ratios for school districts regarding disproportionality in special education services by ethnicity during the 2005-2006 school year. Initially, South Dakota Special Education Program personnel flagged 21 of the 168 districts (about 12%) that showed a

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disproportionate number of minority students identified for special education services compared to the identification of White students for those same services (South Dakota Department of Education, 2008b, 2008c).

Despite the increase in cultural diversity in South Dakota student population, the teaching force continues to be predominantly White, middle-class, and female. This often causes a cultural mismatch between educator and learner (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 1999; Spindler & Spindler, 1994). According to Delpit (1995), people from the majority group or "culture of power" often have limited worldviews because they have never had to adjust from home life to public life. Their public life is an extension of all they have learned in their home life from birth. They may see differing world views as in need of "fixing" or inferior.

Cultural experiences provide the context for teaching and learning for all students. Gay (2000) writes that culture is at the heart of all that we do in education. Culture, as defined here, is the system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs that one carries with them to make meaning of the world they live in (Gay, 2000). Teachers bring their culture to school with them. Spindler and Spindler (1994) explain:

> Teachers carry into the classroom their personal cultural background. They perceive students, all of whom are cultural agents, with inevitable prejudice and preconception. Students likewise come to school with personal cultural backgrounds that influence their perceptions of teachers, other students, and the school itself. Together students and teachers construct, mostly without being conscious of doing it, an environment of meanings enacted in individual and group behaviors, of conflict and accommodation, rejection and acceptance, alienation and withdrawal. (p. xii)

When students come to school, they bring their values, beliefs, and perceptions with them. When they reach the school door, the culture values, beliefs, and perceptions they are likely to encounter are those of the White, middle-class culture rather than those of cultures of color. Irvine (2003) calls this a "lack of cultural synchronization." When a cultural conflict such as this is in place, it can lead to miscommunication, confrontation, hostility, alienation, lower self-esteem and ultimately, school failure. In order for all students to find success in school, educators must find that connection from curriculum to culture (Irvine, 2003).

One possible solution to this cultural disconnect in education has been identified as Culturally Responsive Education Systems (CRES). Culturally Responsive Education Systems are built on the premise that culturally diverse students can excel academically when their culture, language, heritage, and experiences are valued and incorporated into their learning opportunities and processes. Also important in CRES is that culturally diverse students are provided access to high quality teachers, programs, and resources. CRES instill care, respect, and responsibility in the professionals who serve the students. CRES also provide opportunities for teacher reflection, inquiry, and support regarding issues of cultural differences. A school system that is culturally responsive in programming and instruction will allow optimal achievement for all students (Richards, Artiles, Klingner, & Brown, 2005). When the individual self-worth of each child is validated and each child's uniqueness valued, it increases the sense of belonging to the larger group of humankind and creates that bridge or connection to education (Klingner et al., 2005).

Purpose of the Study

Minority student populations in schools are rapidly increasing (Garfield et al., 2003; Kao & Thompson, 2003). Research suggests that although the academic achievement gap between minority students and White students has narrowed in recent years, there still exists a significant gap between less advantaged minority groups such as Native Americans and the more advantaged White student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2008a, 2008b). In addition to lower academic achievement, Native American and other minority students are over-represented in special education services (Harry & Klingner, 2006). The purpose of this study was to analyze the level of culturally responsive practices of South Dakota elementary schools with significant populations of Native American students and to determine how these culturally responsive practices relate to Native American student achievement and representation in special education services.

Research Questions

Question 1. What is the participation rate of South Dakota's Native American students in special education programs compared with that of their White counterparts?

Question 2. How well do culturally responsive behaviors in the areas of

1. School governance, organization, policy and climate

2. Family involvement

3. Curriculum

4. Organization of learning

5. Special education referral process and programs

predict the academic success of Native American students?

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Significance of the Study

The achievement gap between minority students and White students, while narrowed in recent years, continues to be a problem throughout the nation (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). Further, the lack of appropriate and equitable opportunity to learn due to cultural differences may impact the disproportionate numbers of students referred and identified for special education services (Harry & Klingner, 2006). A review of literature provides support for the contention that there are racial, ethnic, and cultural biases in the referral and identification processes for special education. In the famous case of *Larry P. v. Riles* (1979), the appellate court stated that IQ tests used to identify students with the label of EMR were biased against African American children. IQ tests still provide the determination of eligibility for the label of EMR, one of the "judgment" labels determined by school personnel rather than depending on a medical diagnosis (Harry & Klingner, 2006). The eligibility determined by school personnel by "judgment" are the high-incidence categories which have shown evidence of disproportionate representation by minority students (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

Additionally, there is support for the argument that lack of educational opportunity and reduced expectations of achievement may be caused, in part, by cultural conflict that exists between students of differing races, cultures, and ethnicities, and their predominantly White, middle-class, female teachers (Dee, 2001). Dee (2001) reports on studies that have indicated a significant impact on student achievement for African American students who have African American teachers. As stated in the report,

"assignment to an own-race teacher was associated with large and statistically significant achievement gains for both Black and White students" (Dee, 2001, p. 19).

According to Gay (2000), significant changes are needed in how minority students are taught in American public schools. Since how one speaks, thinks, and writes reflects culture and affects performance, aligning instruction to cultural learning and communication styles, curriculum, and procedures will improve student learning. Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, then, may be a solution for the lagging academic achievement of minority students (Gay, 2000).

This study assessed the cultural responsiveness of elementary schools in South Dakota serving significant Native American populations to determine whether a relationship existed between the levels of cultural responsiveness and the academic success of Native American students. The results of this study added to the research regarding the impact of cultural relevance in educational settings and opportunities for minority students, particularly for Native American students. By examining relationships of indicators of cultural responsiveness to indicators of academic success of Native American students, educators serving such populations have a better understanding of practices that increase academic achievement for these students.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the possibility that the survey responders were non-Native American counselors. This could bias the perception of cultural responsiveness toward Native American students. Also, the fact that counselors were reporting on their own school may have created potential bias in the assessment scores.

Another limitat[ion of] this study is simply the small number of respondents. This study was conducted [in] public elementary schools in South Dakota that served significant numbers of Native American students. Due to the n-size necessary for public schools to report Native Americans as a subgroup, only 63 elementary schools in South Dakota were eligible [to par]ticipate. The requirement for permission from the school superintendent of each district further limited the pool of potential participants.

F[ina]lly, one of the schools in the study was the district where the researcher is emplo[yed]. This connection to the school district was a potential bias.

Delimitations

This study examined the cultural responsiveness of elementary schools as perceived by the school counselor of those schools. The survey chosen for this research study was created to be a self-assessment completed by a representative team of stakeholders from each school. This representative group would include special education teachers, general education teachers, paraprofessionals and other support personnel, and school counselors, as well as administrators. It was recommended to be completed by participants across racial/ethnic groups, too, in order to provide a diverse perspective into the quality of cultural responsiveness in each domain.

Although the survey selected for this research project was intended to be used as a self-assessment completed by a representative team of stakeholders from each school, the researcher chose to survey only school counselors from each participating school. This decision was made for the purpose of creating a common perspective, that of the school counselor, from individual participating schools. Additionally, the researcher believed it

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would be very difficult to get a sufficient survey completion rate without limiting the focus to a single individual from each participating school.

This study analyzed comparative academic success data from White students and from Native American students. Native American student data was selected as the only minority student data to compare in this study due to the significantly large size of the Native American student population in South Dakota as compared to other minority groups in the state. Tribal schools were not included in the study because the Tribal School achievement data is not publically reported on the State NCLB Report Card.

Definition of Terms

Advantaged: students raised in the "culture of power" or those from socially and culturally dominant groups who generally begin school with more of the cultural capital it will take to succeed in school (Nieto, 1999).

Cultural capital: "the general cultural background, knowledge, dispositions, and skills that are passed from one generation to the next" (MacLeod, 1995, p.13). According to Villalpando and Solorzano (2005), minorities and students from low income neighborhoods tend to have fewer resources of cultural capital and may be less likely to use those resources in school contexts.

Culture: the system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral standards, worldviews, and beliefs that one carries with them to make meaning of the world they live in (Gay, 2000).

Culturally Responsive Educational Systems: educational systems that are culturally responsive in their programming and instruction so that optimal achievement

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might occur for all students including those from culturally diverse backgrounds. These systems include five domains relevant to addressing the needs of diverse students:

1. School Governance, Organization, Policy, and Climate – the general operation and structure of the school, including policies and reforms associated with school governance, as well as attitudes and perceptions prevalent in the school.

2. Family Involvement – the extent to which families communicate with and participate in their children's school and are perceived to be valued partners by the school.

3. Curriculum – the content and skills included in educational programs.

4. Organization of Learning – the activities involved in the exchange of knowledge in the classroom, including the teaching and learning process, classroom achievement and assessment, and behavior management.

5. Special Education Referral Process and Programs – the delivery of services involving pre-referral and referral processes, eligibility, placement, and instructional programming (Richards et al., 2005).

Disproportionate representation: representation of a particular group of students at a rate different than that found in the general population (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006). Minority students – students from cultures outside the "culture of power" or students of color (Delpit, 1995).

Ethnic/Racial Terms: Throughout this document, reference is made to specific ethnic/racial groups. The terms used include White, Native American, Hispanic, Asian American, and African American. These terms were chosen as they are all deemed

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appropriate terms and they are the terms frequently used in literature. Further, the subgroups listed on the South Dakota Report Card for school districts where the indicators of school success are publically reported, are identified by these terms.

NCLB Report Card: Section 1111(h)(2) of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that each local education agency (LEA) that receives Title I, Part A funding to disseminate specific LEA- and campus-level data to 1) all LEA campuses, 2) parents of all enrolled students, and 3) to make the information widely available through public means such as posting on the Internet, distribution to the media, or distribution through public agencies.

The following data must be disseminated for the LEA and each campus:

- Assessment results in the aggregate and disaggregated by race, ethnicity, gender, disability status, migrant status, English proficiency, and economically disadvantaged.

  o by performance level,

  o showing two-year trend data for each subject and grade tested,

  o with a comparison between annual objectives and actual performance for each student group,

  o including the percentage of each group of students not tested.

- Graduation rates for secondary school students.

- Performance of school districts on adequate yearly progress measures

- Number and names of Title I schools identified as in need of improvement, including information on any schools identified for improvement.

- Professional qualifications of teachers in the state, including the percentage of

  teachers teaching with emergency or provisional credentials and the

  percentage of classes in the state that are not taught by highly qualified

  teachers, including a comparison between high- and low-poverty schools

  (Texas Education Agency, 2009).

Weighted Odds Ratio: a formula calculated to determine the likelihood that a

student from a particular racial/ethnic subgroup would participate in special education

services (Flor & Cain, 2006).

List of Acronyms

CEC: Council for Exceptional Children

CREDE: Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence

CRES: Culturally Responsive Education Systems

Dakota STEP: Dakota State Test of Educational Progress

ED: Emotional Disturbance

EMR: Educable Mental Retardation

IEFA: Indian Education For All

IQ: Intelligence Quotient

LEA: Local Education Agency

MR: Mental Retardation

NAEP: National Assessment of Educational Progress

NCCRESt: National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems

NCES: National Center for Educational Statistics

NCLB: No Child Left Behind

NIES: National Indian Education Study

NIUSI: National Institute for Urban School Improvement

OCR: Office of Civil Rights

PTO: Parent Teacher Organization

SLD: Specific Learning Disability

SLI: Speech/Language Impairment

SPSS: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

Organization of the Study

Chapter I of this study described the present demographic state of public schools

across the nation and specifically in South Dakota. Along with the increasing racial

diversification, achievement rates continue to show that some racial groups including

White students continue to score higher on measures of academic achievement than other

less advantaged racial groups including Native American students. Because of the role a

student's culture plays in his or her educational development, this study looked at how

factors of cultural relevance related to a student's lev of achievement.

Chapter II reviews the literature on the research on each of the factors identified

as influential to the cultural relevance of an educational system. The factors identified by

the National Center for Culturally Relevant Educational Systems include: (1) School

Governance, Organization, Policy and Climate, (2) Family Involvement, (3) Curriculum,

(4) Organization of Learning, and (5) Special Education Pre-referral and Referral

Processes and Programs.

Chapter III explains the methods used in this research study. The explanation includes the purpose of the study, how and why the participants were chosen, and a description of the instrument selected to survey the participants. Additionally, this chapter includes the procedures utilized by this researcher to collect the data and the justification for how the data are analyzed.

Chapter IV details the results of the data collected. Along with the results, an analysis of the significance of the relationship between each of the factors of cultural relevance in an educational system and each of the indicators of academic success is discussed.

Chapter V discusses the relevance of the findings and the implications to create better learning environments conducive to increasing achievement for minority students. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research that would increase understanding in the effort to close the achievement gap between racial groups and provide appropriate and equitable educational opportunities for all students.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A review of literature was conducted to provide background information on the five domains defined in the self-assessment survey used to determine the level of culturally responsive practices in individual schools. Those five domains are: School Governance, Organization, Policy, and Climate; Family Involvement; Curriculum; Organization of Learning; and Special Education Referrals and Processes. This information provides an understanding of culturally responsive practices and a basis for considering how such practices impact student academic achievement of minority students.

School Governance, Organization, Policy, and Climate

Equity in Special Education Placement: A School Self-assessment Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice defines School Governance, Organization, Policy, and Climate as "...the general operation and structure of the school, including policy and reforms associated with school governance, as well as attitudes and perceptions prevalent in the school" (Richards, et al., 2005, p. 3). Specifically, in the domain of School Governance and Organization, Policy, and Climate, the authors explore school administrative understanding and support for the influence of culture and ethnicity on school achievement, the extent to which all staff members have the opportunity to learn about cultural diversity and the inclusion of culturally diverse families as valued school

partners. In this domain, the authors also address the participation of parents and families in the development and implementations of policies and reforms. Additionally, the authors address school climate by probing cultural biases and providing training opportunities to deal with understanding cultural differences. Further, questions are directed at the promotion of respect for all and the extent to which the school strives for improvement of educational outcomes for all students (Richards et al., 2005).

School Governance and Organization

"Governance is about power – the power to decide" (Cooper, Fusarelli, & Randall, 2004, p. 136). In education, governance is "…people, agencies, institutions, and factors involved in making decisions and developing policies that direct, guide, and sometimes control the work of schools" (O'Hair, McLaughlin, & Reitzug, 2000, p. 286). In this section of the literature review, discussion reflects how people in the role of educational leaders use decision-making to direct the work of schools. Discussion then turns to how agencies, institutions, and other factors influence decisions that impact the success of schools.

According to Bolman and Deal (2003), an effective leader of an organization is one who can look at each situation through multiple lenses or frames: the structural frame, the human resource frame, the political frame, and the symbolic frame. The ability to reframe makes it possible to view the same situation from multiple perspectives which is helpful in   larity ab   iting opu   a finding productive strategies.

Effective leadership is needed in school organizations. It has long been acknowledged that strong school leadership is key to an effective school (Harry &

Klingner, 2006). The beliefs, values, and educational philosophies, as well as the
interpersonal and management skills of the school principal, have profound influence on
the climate and culture of a school (Edmonds & Frederickson, 1978; Harry & Klingner,
2006; Jackson, Logsdon, & Taylor, 1983; Scheurich, 1998). Hiring practices, retention
of good teachers, classroom groupings, class size and scheduling, visitor policies,
tolerance of interruptions, and coordination of curricular programming are all factors that
principals influence within their schools. According to a study done by Harry and
Klingner (2006), a strong principal with the ability to influence the quality of teaching in
his or her building and to create positive personal interaction with parents can produce
good measures of student success. The presence of effective school leaders is important
to the educational achievement of Native American students because in an effective
school, all students will experience quality learning opportunities (Harry & Klingner,
2006).

One of the most important responsibilities of a principal is to hire teachers and
assign them to classes (Harry & Klingner, 2006). The problem is that in the wealthier,
more attractive school districts, principals may have a large stack of resumes from which
to choose, while principals in the high-poverty urban schools have _____ ____ ___ they
can get (Krei, 1998; Harr_ _ _____ ____ _006). _____er challenge facing principals is the
retention of good teachers. High turnover rates plague the high-poverty, less desirable
schools because beginning teachers will get some experience and then request transfers to
schools deemed more desirable (Harry & Klingner, 2006). Issues of teacher quality are
further perpetuated when principals transfer inadequate teachers from school to school

rather than going through the dismissal process or assign the weakest teachers to the weakest students (Krei, 1998; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Haycock & Crawford, 2008).

Teacher quality makes a big difference in the learning teachers produce in their classrooms (Haycock & Crawford, 2008). Gordon, Kane, and Staiger (2006) showed in their Los Angeles study that students taught by teachers in the top quartile of effectiveness had an average advance of five percentile points per year while those students taught by teachers in the bottom quartile lose an average of five percentile points per year. These effects are also cumulative. This study would suggest, then, that if the low achieving students would be assigned to four highly effective teachers in a row, it would significantly close the achievement gap. Strong principals have the ability to influence student achievement in their school environments because of their input with teacher assignments (Harry & Klingner, 2006). If Native American students were provided with highly effective teachers consistently, their academic success would increase.

Harry and Klingner (2006) found that coordination of curricula, class scheduling, and tolerance of interruptions showed a marked difference between schools. The neediest schools in the study had schedules that required students to frequently move from program to program and lacked continuous time blocks that would allow classroom teachers to get quality time with their students and to learn their students' abilities and interests. This "hyper" kind of schedule seemed to make the students more hyper. Teachers reported they didn't have time to teach. Principals with strong leadership skills and the ability to utilize decision-making to create positive personal interactions in the

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school environment can influence the factors such as curriculum planning and scheduling that lead to improved student achievement (Brantlinger, 2001; Harry & Klingner, 2006).

America is founded on the belief that with education and hard work, any American has the opportunity of upward social mobility. Schools, then, would be the tools by which that opportunity is provided (Harry & Klingner, 2006). Social reproduction theory, however, argues that "structural features of schools ensure that schooling tends to reproduce rather than change the societal status quo by preparing children to function at the same societal level from which they came" (Harry & Klingner, 2006, p. 23). Other researchers have strengthened the social reproduction theory by showing examples of schools that demonstrate social reproduction through such practices as tracking students resulting in low expectations, inequitable funding, and differentiated curriculums according to student social class levels (Anyan, 1981; Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 1985). The idea of institutionalized structuralism suggests that decisions and outcomes are determined by the existing structure that operates within the organization. More recent research, however, states that individual educational leaders can overcome the notion of social reproduction and can make positive change (Brantlinger, 2001; Harry & Klingner, 2006). Brantlinger (2001) argues that decisions are made by individuals who do, indeed, have the power to effect change independent of the school structure.

The structure of decision-making within education agencies or institutions impacts the way in which educational leaders can make changes that lead to improved student achievement (Meyers, Meyers, & Gelzheiser, 2001). A study done by Meyers et al. (2001), indicated that the productivity of decision-making teams that employed

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positive group process procedures with active involvement from a number of team members was greater than that of a decision-making team that was dominated by a principal with minimal input from the team members. According to Gutmann (1999), there are differing views of where the decision making power that controls the work of schools should originate. In *Democratic Education* (1999), Gutmann describes three existing perspectives about decision making in education and who should have the ultimate authority of making those decisions. These three theoretical perspectives are labeled the "family state," the "state of families," and the "state of individuals."

The "family state" perspective assumes that only the state has the knowledge and competence to direct children in their proper development. Gutmann (1999) does not agree that the state should hold the sole decision-making authority in schools. Differing opinions, even as were present in the time of Socrates about what should be learned by children, shape the criticism for this theoretical perspective. "As long as we differ not just in our opinions but in our moral convictions about the good life, the state's educational role cannot be defined as the realizing of the good life, objectively defined, for each of its citizens" (Gutmann, 1999, p. 28).

The theoretical perspective of the "state of families" moves the decision-making control to the parents. Within the framework of the "state of families" perspective, family values and particular ways of life can be passed on to the children. Parents can shield their children from competing viewpoints that are contradictory to their own ways of thinking. However, parents could also teach children perspectives that would be harmful to other individuals in society through prejudice and intolerance. Gutmann (1999) challenges the assertions of the "state of families" perspective, contending that

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children are not merely family members, but members of society as well. Cooper, Fusarelli, and Randall (2004) concur, stating that although parents know best the needs of their children and they have a vested interest in the success of their children, society has a right to participate in the design of the education of children (Cooper et al., 2004).

The third theoretical perspective about decision making in education is identified as the "state of individuals" (Gutmann, 1999). According to the "state of individuals" perspective, "Every child must have the opportunity to choose, without external constraints, his or her own notion of the good life" (Cooper et al., 2004, p. 147). Gutmann (1999) challenges this assertion on two points. First, this neutral position is an impossibility. The purpose of education, to take full advantage of freedoms, liberty, and rationality, is a value system in itself. Second, allowing children to choose their own idea of a good life from the whole spectrum of social world views assumes that any worldview is as good and as valuable as the next just as long as the child makes the choice. Some of these world views could pose a threat to the lives of other individuals and society in general. Cooper et al. (2004) agree there is an obvious need to teach some civic values to children.

Believing that each of the previous theoretical perspectives, the "family state," the "state of families," and the "state of individuals" is an inappropriate framework from which decisions about education should be made, Gutmann (1999) proposes a fourth alternative perspective which she calls the "democratic state of education." According to Gutmann (1999), "decisions about education are arrived through a shared governance approach involving government officials, parents, and students" (p. 46). This shared decision making model across citizens, parents, and professional educators supports the

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values of democracy. A democratic state would provide education that would allow all its members to participate in politics, choose among an acceptable array of perspectives of a good life, and be parts of families or other sub-communities that give identity to citizens (Gutmann, 1999). Educational leaders who utilize a shared decision making model effectively see more productivity in school improvement efforts than those who take up a more authoritarian form of leadership (Meyers et al., 2001). A shared governance model could increase participation by Native American school community members offering opportunity to create perspectives respectful to the Native American culture and creating buy-in to the school improvement efforts.

Decision making and organization within a school can be influenced by societal demands and existing or institutionalized structure (Anyan, 1981; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Cooper et al., 2004; Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 1985). A strong educational leader, however, can have a profound influence on the climate and culture of the school, the quality of instruction provided in the school, and the amount of student success that occurs (Edmonds & Frederickson, 1978; Harry & Klingner, 2006; Jackson, Logsdon, & Taylor, 1983; Scheurich, 1998).

Policy

Policy is defined as "…a political process where needs, goals, and intentions are translated into a set of objectives, laws, policies, and programs which, in turn affect resource allocations, actions, and outputs, which are the basis for evaluation, reforms and new policies" (Cooper et al., 2004, p. 3). According to Cooper and colleagues (2004), historically, policies have been created in education to solve problems such as how to educate the soldiers returning from World War II with the G.I. Bill. The National

Science Foundation and the National Defense Education Act came about to help deal with U.S. competition in space travel. And in the 1960's, Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act was written to overcome social and racial injustices (Cooper et al., 2004). Arguably, education can be improved with better policies (Kerr, 1976; Cooper et al., 2004).

To help readers understand educational policymaking and the concepts and theoretical perspectives driving educational policymaking, Cooper et al. (2004) describe a four dimensional conceptual framework. First, the normative dimension includes the beliefs, values, and ideologies that compel societies to seek improvement and to make change. Normative policies are expressions of the functions of society.

Second, the structural dimension includes structures, systems, and governmental processes that promote and support educational policies. Understanding the role and influence of federal, state, and local institutions is essential to understanding how these institutions impact educational policy (Cooper et al., 2004).

The third dimension, the constituentive dimension, includes the theories of the interest groups, providers and users, and influential beneficiaries of the policymaking process. In this dimension, policies are formed by constituent groups who favor or oppose the policies and by their ability to influence policy makers (Cooper et al., 2004).

The fourth and final dimension, the technical dimension, includes the planning, practice, implementation, and evaluation of policymaking. This dimension is where the examination of the effects and consequences of the implementation of the policy happens (Cooper et al., 2004).

Cooper et al. (2004) point out that this conceptual framework is rooted in concern for ethical considerations of equality and social justice. According to Hudson (1999), schools have "failed many minority children and the poor" (p. 139). For years data has shown that poor minority students in U.S. schools do significantly worse in showing academic achievement than do the White students in U.S. schools (Sampson, 2007). Peebles (2000) states that minority students and students living in poverty have been underserved in public education, and by nearly all reported data, continue to score below the achievement level of White students. The real issue causing differences in student performance, states Schmidt and Cogan (2009), is unequal access to "high-quality, challenging curriculum" (p. 47). Fixing this discrepancy, according to Schmidt and Cogan, will require change in educational policies. Garfield, Garfield, and Willardson (2003) agree that providing true equity in education will require much policy change in the political arena. In order to create better policies that will lead to improved schools, the policies must be focused on the ethical concerns of equity and social justice (Gutmann, 1987; Haller & Strike, 1986; Cooper et al., 2004).

Cooper et al. (2004) write "educational policies grounded in ethical concerns would be devoted, for example, to reducing or eliminating the over placement of minority children in low-track curriculum" (p. 50). Jonathan Kozol, a long-time public school advocate, made suggestions almost twenty years ago of policy changes that would help create equity in public schools. In his book, *Savage Inequalities: Children in America's Schools* (1991), Kozol wrote of the realization he came to from visiting schools across America of just how different school can be for poor and minority children compared to White and middle-class children. Kozol also believed changes in educational policies

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would impact the achievement gap seen between poor, minority students and their White counterparts. In more recent writing, Kozol (2006) relates observations from visits to inner city schools populated by mostly poor and minority students. At these schools, instruction has been restricted to scripted repetition and rote memorization where teachers are teaching children with "managerial proficiency" by moving the children through the scripted lessons with automaticity producing robot-like students. Kozol (2005) states that the schools serving poor and minority students must settle for a different set of goals than those that serve the middle class and upper middle class students. Further, Kozol (2005) asserts that

> much of the rhetoric of 'rigor' and 'high-standards' that we hear so frequently, no matter how egalitarian in spirit it may sound to some, is fatally belied by practices that vulgarize the intellects of children and take from their education far too many of the opportunities for cultural and critical reflectiveness without which citizens become receptacles for other people's ideologies and ways of looking at the world but lack the independent spirits to create their own. (p. 98)

This research is important because it argues that an inferior quality of education that would not be tolerated in more affluent schools is accepted and even encouraged by educational policies in schools that serve poor and minority students. Cooper et al. (2004) state that educational policies that show ethical concern for equity and social justice, such as policies that would help to narrow the achievement gap between the races or provide better educational opportunities for poor children are often thrown out because of the cost.

Climate

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) has recognized the importance of a safe and positive school climate for the development and academic achievement of

students (Council for Exceptional Children, 2008). The CEC found that schools

implementing positive school climate strategies more successfully create appropriate

learning environments for students. Additionally, the CEC discovered that students feel

safer and learn better when clear policies are present regarding the prohibition of

discriminatory or harassment acts. To ensure that safe learning environments exist, CEC

(2008) approved a *Safe and Positive School Climate Policy* which proposes that:

- All schools should have clear policies that prohibit harassment and discriminatory behaviors of any kind, including those related to ethnic background, language, age, abilities, family status, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious and spiritual values, and geographic location. Students and staff should be clearly informed of such policies and procedures, including data collection, reporting, sanctions, and indemnity to those reporting incidents. Educational efforts at the federal, provincial, state, and local levels should promote policies, guidelines, and universal interventions designed to reduce or prevent discrimination or harassment as well as to create a school climate that is conducive to respect and dignity for all individuals.
- Because bullying and harassment create emotional wounds that amplify the hardships of exceptionality as well as jeopardize the emotional and mental well-being of students, teachers, administrators, and other school support personnel with knowledge of harassment or bullying carry the responsibility to report these behaviors to relevant authorities and school personnel similar to the professional obligation to report child abuse.
- In recognition that students' families, professionals, and staff may also be at risk of experiencing discrimination on the basis of factors including ethnic and racial backgrounds, language, age, abilities, family status, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religious and spiritual values, and geographic location, school policies, activities, and interventions related to a positive school climate should address the needs and safety of adults as well as students.
- School-based implementation of antidiscrimination policies must equally support and provide open access for the participation of students in activities and student-led groups designed to enhance a respectful, safe, and positive school climate and to promote respect for diversity in general or with respect to one or more diversity elements.
- To support antidiscriminatory policies, schools should provide students, staff, and administrators with access to a range of resources, including designated professionals with expertise in intercultural and diversity-related counseling and human-relations.

- School policies should promote practices and curricula that build a sense of community and understanding for and among all students in recognition of the positive relationship between school climate, learning environments, and educational outcomes for all individuals.
- Professional development for educators and educational administrators should build schools' capacity to implement a diversity-rich curriculum as well as to respond effectively to instances of harassment, bullying, or intimidation. To this end, such activities should enhance educators' skills and strategies for effectively delivering culturally-sensitive educational experiences within the context of current standards-based curricula. Similarly, professional development for administrators should develop their leadership skills and strategies for developing and implementing antidiscrimination policies and for ensuring positive learning environments for all students. Schools should provide opportunities for parent education to complement professional development for educators.
- Teacher and educational leadership preparation programs should prepare educators, administrators, and related services personnel to create safe learning environments and to intervene effectively in the event that harassment or discriminatory behaviors occur. This includes understanding about the range of ways that schools can evaluate school climate comprehensively using evidence-based practices as well as how school climate findings can be used to build authentic learning communities that support positive youth development and academic achievement. (Council for Exceptional Children, 2008, p. 1 - 2)

The Safe and Positive School Climate Policy provided by the CEC (2008) specifically addresses the need for attention to culture and diversity as a piece of the structure that will create a positive school environment for all individuals.

Generally, students who attend schools in low income areas have the lowest academic achievement and the least developed social skills (Elias & Haynes, 2008). A government report of nationwide reading scores revealed that fourth graders from inner city schools scored lower than 4th graders from urban and rural, small town schools (NCES, 2002). These urban schools also had the lowest ratings of school climate (Elias & Haynes, 2008). Characteristics of these inner city schools included unimaginative

curricula, over-crowdedness, inadequate facilities, and a lack of high expectations for student learning (Kozol, 2005).

Despite such conditions, some individuals seem to be more resilient than others (Elias & Haynes, 2008). Protective processes have been identified that are most likely to account for differences in resiliency. These protective processes are "strengths or resources associated with positive individual outcomes" that help people function well in society (Dalton, Elias, & Wandersman, 2007, p. 245). In schools, these protective processes are defined in terms of school climate, or "the quality and consistency of interpersonal interactions within the school community which influence children's cognitive, social-emotional, and psychological development" (Haynes, Emmons, & Ben-Avie, 1997, p. 322). In their study, Elias and Haynes (2008) focused on two of the protective processes identified in the framework of the research on resilience. The two processes are social-emotional competence and perceived social support.

Social-emotional competence is the ability to exhibit key emotional, cognitive, and behavioral skills across a wide range of social environments (Elias & Haynes, 2008). In school, students should be able to communicate appropriately with peers, develop sensitivity to issues that include or exclude students from social groups, and perform assertive, self-calming, and cooperative behaviors (Elias et al., 1997). For minority students, these skills are particularly important for achieving success in school (Baker, 1999; Banks et al., 2001; Luthar, 1995; Reyes, Gillock, Kobus, & Sanchez, 2000). Students' abilities to regulate their emotions when they become frustrated or angry will greatly affect how much energy they can put into learning and focusing on academic tasks in spite of the difficulties they are facing (Elias & Haynes, 2008).

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Elias and Clabby (1992) studied elementary students transitioning into middle school. Their research showed that students who participated in a program designed to increase social-emotional competencies showed improved teacher ratings of behavior. In 2001, Welsh, Parke, Widaman, and O'Neil showed that academic competence and social-emotional competence were positively related. In 2004, Zins, Weissberg, Wang, and Walberg listed the outcomes from the implementation of social-emotional learning programs. In addition to improved school attitudes and behaviors, social-emotional learning programs increased student performance in the following ways:

- Improved math, literacy, and social studies skills

- Higher achievement test scores and grades and no decreases in standardized test scores

- Improved learning-to-learn skills

- Better problem solving and planning abilities

- Use of higher level reasoning strategies

- Improvements in reading comprehension

Perceived social support is seen as a positive factor in the development of children (Cauce, Reid, Landesman, & Gonzalez, 1990; Elliott, Malecki, & Demaray, 2001; Munsch & Wampler, 1993; Rosenfeld, Richman & Bowen, 2000). Baker (1999) asserts that social connectedness is required for children to learn to respect social institutions. Supportive and caring teachers produce higher levels of student motivation and school achievement (Wentzel, 1999; Rosenfeld et al., 2000). Supportive teachers with high expectations are strong predictors of higher levels of academic success (Murdock, 1999; Voelkl & Frone, 2000). A study by Wooley and Bowen (2007) reveals

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that students who report having supportive adults in their lives at home and at school have higher levels of engagement in school. This study demonstrated that supportive and caring adults build resilience in students with multiple risk factors impacting their lives. In fact, this protective factor is most important for members of historically discriminated minority groups who are male (Wooley & Bowen, 2007). This is an important consideration in improving school achievement for Native American students because having supportive and caring adults in schools serving Native American students could positively impact their school success.

Many Native American students face educational settings that lack the protective processes that promote resilience (Powers, 2006). In 1991, the U.S. Secretary of Education's Indian Nations at Risk Task Force reported that Native American students must deal with "…an unfriendly school climate that fails to promote appropriate academic, social, cultural, and spiritual development among many Native students" (Indian Nations at Risk, 1991, p. 7). In Bergstrom, Cleary, and Peacock's 2003 book, Native American students speak out about challenges they face at school that make it hard to learn. Carol (Navajo) talks about culture differences and teacher expectations:

> I think that at times it's difficult to be Native American in school because you're learning a lot of new ideas and new ways of doing things. And I think that it's difficult to try to keep like culture with some of those new ideas and new things that you're learning. And I think that sometimes it's hard because I wish that we could learn like things about…our people and about different nations, different Native American nations. And I don't think [teachers] set very high standards for you. And I think a lot of times, Native students kinda get pushed to the back of the classroom, or they're kinda put on the back burner. (Bergstrom, Cleary, & Peacock, 2003, p. 44)

Lisa (Dakota) reveals how racist acts can create feelings of anger and isolation:

> I thought elementary was really hard for me, from about third grade until I

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moved up here....I used to get teased on the bus; there was this fourth grade kid who used to push [me] down on the bus and call me 'nigger.' And I used to pretend I had really bad headaches, and I'd go to the nurse every day, and I'd get sent home [to] my Aunt Kim's house or back home, and, you know, I'd be okay after I was home. I hated going to school and getting teased and having teachers be mean to me. I was still little; I didn't know what was going on... Even in one of my kindergarten recitals, we have me on tape singing, "One little, two little, three little Indians." (Bergstrom et al., 2003, p. 46)

Powers (2006) reports that research has shown there are universally effective educational practices that repeatedly demonstrate direct effects on student outcomes. The practices identified by Powers include student engagement, student motivation, effective instruction, rigorous curriculum, positive school climate, and parental involvement. According to Powers (2006), "American Indian underachievement may be attributed to a lack of access to those universal conditions that support school success, and this access may be limited by cultural incompatibility" (p. 22).

In her 2006 study of data from 240 urban American Indian youth, ages 9 to 18, (primarily Ojibwa, Lakota, and Dakota) from two Midwestern cities, Powers defined school climate as "school personnel supportiveness and safe, drug-free schools" (p. 44). Interestingly, the most notable finding of her study was the significant impact of school climate on measured educational outcomes. Powers (2006) found that personnel supportiveness was the major contributing factor to students' perceptions of the quality of their school climate, and school climate had the largest effect on the measured educational outcomes of the students.

Family Involvement

Equity in Special Education Placement: A School Self-Assessment Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice, defines family involvement as "the extent to which

families communicate with and participate in their children's school and are perceived to be valued partners by the school" (Richards et al., 2005). Specifically, the self-assessment tool addresses the following:

- Providing communication systems between families and school
- Providing professional development for staff on effective communication with parents from diverse backgrounds
- Having a welcoming school environment for parents
- Surveying parents from diverse backgrounds to get suggestions for involving them in their children's education
- Providing adequate information about pre-referral interventions, involving parents in the pre-referral/referral processes, and providing training on understanding rights and services under IDEA
- Providing culturally competent staff and community contacts
- Assisting families in accessing community supports
- Ensuring responsiveness to parent concerns
- Using parent liaisons and providing services to make parent meetings convenient
- Involving parents in school governance. (p. 3)

Educators have long been interested in the positive impact parent involvement in our schools may have on student achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001). Though widely accepted as part of the remedy to the shortcomings of student achievement in our education system, research findings on parental involvement and its relationship to student achievement have been somewhat inconsistent (Fan & Chen, 2001). While some studies have found a positive effect of parental involvement on student learning (Christenson, Rounds, & Gorney, 1992; Singh et al., 1995; Strayhorn, 2010), others have found little or no positive effect (Bobbett, 1995; Ford, 1989; Strayhorn, 2010).

This inconsistent research may be due to the lack of a guiding theoretical framework which can cause unclear or inconsistent definitions of the constructs of parental involvement or student achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001). Fortunately, some frameworks have been defined to guide further research. Epstein (1994) has defined six

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types of parental involvement related to schools: (1) assisting parents in child-rearing skills, (2) school-parent communication, (3) involving parents in school volunteer opportunities, (4) involving parents in home-based learning, (5) involving parents in school decision making, and (6) involving parents in school-community collaborations. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) offer a framework of the construct of parental involvement that focuses on three main issues: (1) why parents become involved in their children's education, (2) how parents choose specific types of involvement, and (3) why parental involvement has positive influence on student's education outcomes.

Parental involvement, then, is seen as a multi-faceted concept involving a variety of behaviors and practices (Balli, 1996; Strayhorn, 2010). Additionally, there is evidence suggesting that some behaviors and practices defining parental involvement have more impact on student achievement than do others (Singh et al., 1995; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hong & Ho, 2005). In a meta-analysis of empirical research on the bivariate relationship of parental involvement to student achievement, Fan and Chen (2001) found that parental involvement does indeed have a positive relationship to student achievement. The meta-analysis showed that parent expectations and aspirations had a much stronger positive relationship than home supervision. Furthermore, parental involvement has a more positive impact when using a more global indicator like GPA rather than a specific indicator like a math grade.

A recent study looking at the role of families on the math achievement of Black high school students showed that three aspects of parental involvement were statistically significant predictors of math achievement (Strayhorn, 2010). First, students whose parents attended school meetings earned higher math achievement scores than their peers

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whose parents did not attend school meetings. Strayhorn (2010) reports that parents who attend school meetings know more about available resources at the school, progress of their children, and any problems that may need to be addressed. Thus, the parents can make sure their children get the assistance needed from teachers or school counselors to help them be successful.

The second aspect of parental involvement Strayhorn (2010) found to be a statistically significant predictor of math achievement for Black high school students was parents checking students' homework. The relationship of parents checking students' homework to math achievement was, however, a negative correlation. The students whose parents "rarely" or "never" checked the homework of their student scored higher on math achievement than did those students whose parents checked homework "very often." The conclusion of Strayhorn (2010) regarding this result was that possibly parents of students who struggle with math may monitor their child's work more closely than those parents of students who don't struggle with math. This conclusion is supported by the findings of Berry (2005), who found that self-empowerment is related to Black students' success in math.

The third aspect of parental involvement Strayhorn (2010) found to be a statistically significant predictor of math achievement for Black high school students was the educational expectations of one's mother. Strayhorn (2010) reports that parents who hold high expectations for their children offer encouragement and support to their children, both of which are critical factors to student achievement.

Research shows that the effects of parental involvement in a child's education can vary across racial and ethnic backgrounds as well as other variables (Desimone, 1999;

Hong & Ho, 2005; Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009). For example, a study by Desimone (1999) looked at the effects of parental involvement on student achievement across race and socioeconomic status. The results indicated significant differences exist in the relationship between parental involvement and student achievement according to the students' race and family income. Specifically, Desimone (1999) showed that student's talk with parents about post-high school plans predicted a significant increase in reading and grades for White students while the effect was insignificant for Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. While volunteering or fundraising showed an insignificant effect for Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians, that variable predicted an increase in math, reading, and grades for White students. Parent's rules about homework, grades, and chores predicted a decrease in math, reading, and grades for White students while those same rules showed an insignificant effect on Black and Hispanic students. Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) involvement was associated with an increase in math and reading for both Whites and Blacks and PTO involvement was associated with an increase in reading for Hispanics. At the same time, PTO involvement had no effect on achievement in math or reading for Asians. Understanding how family involvement practices impact student achievement differently among ethnic/racial groups is important to the study of Native American student achievement because the family involvement practices used by schools and recognized by school staff as quality family involvement practices may be those that positively impact achievement for White students but may not impact Native American students.

Hong and Ho (2005) discovered that two dimensions of parental involvement, communication and parental educational aspiration, created higher student educational

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aspirations across racial/ethnic groups. The indirect effects of higher student educational aspirations across all race/ethnicity groups showed positive effects for both initial achievement status and for subsequent academic growth.

Conversely, evidence of a differing impact of family involvement across racial/ethnic groups is provided by a study done by Davis-Kean and Sexton (2009). This study looked at whether family processes previously found to be important for student achievement successes are predictive of student achievement in all racial/ethnic groups or whether there are differences between them. The findings showed that parents' educational attainment was predictive of parental expectations, reading in the home, and school involvement across all races. Parents' expectations for educational success were previously found to be a strong predictor for achievement (Alexander, Entwisle, & Bedinger, 1994; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

The study by Davis-Kean and Sexton (2009) confirms that higher parental expectations are related to higher achievement for European Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans but not for Hispanic Americans. Further, parent behaviors and home educational environment factors were important predictors of successful achievement for students in all reported racial/ethnic groups except African Americans. For the European Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans, reading in kindergarten was an important predictor of third grade achievement but not for African Americans. The construct of warmth, meaning a close affectionate relationship between parent and child, showed a negative relationship to achievement for all reported race/ethnicity groups except African Americans (Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009). Although Native Americans were not included in the study by Davis-Kean & Sexton, the U.S.

Department of Education has identified the lack of parental involvement for Native American students as a significant factor in academic success for Native American children (Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008).

In 1991, the U.S. Department of Education's Indian Nations at Risk Task Force reported that lack of parent and community involvement in the education of Native American children was among the reasons Native American students were at risk for school failure. The task force identified strategies to improve parent involvement such as identifying ways parents can help their children; strengthening the relationships between Native American parents, family members, students, and school staff; and federal laws that encourage parent involvement. While there have been some successful programs that implemented the strategies and found success in developing a successful family-school partnership with Native American families, those programs seem to be the exception rather than the rule (Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008).

Christenson (2003) asserts that if we intend to raise the bar for children's performance in school and achieve higher standards and outcomes for students, creating family-school partnerships, not parent-teacher partnerships, is an essential means to that end and must become routine practice. According to her research, Christenson (2003) has discovered many barriers that stand in the way of developing productive family-school partnerships. Her list includes:

Structural Barriers
- Limited time for communication and meaningful dialogue
- Communication primarily during crises
- Limited contact for building trust within the family-school relationship
- Lack of routine communication system
- Limited understanding of the constraints faced by the other partner

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Psychological Barriers
- Partial resistance toward increasing home-school cooperation
- Lack of belief in a partnership orientation to enhance student learning/development.
- A blaming and labeling attitude permeates the home-school atmosphere
- A win-lose rather than a win-win attitude in the presence of conflict. (Christenson, 2003, p. 461)

"The stimulus for engaging parents in education lies with educators; therefore, addressing barriers for educators is necessary" (Christenson, 2003, p 463). Essential to addressing those barriers is strong leadership and administrative support to increasing meaningful family involvement. When schools are responsive to the needs of parents and are friendly and welcoming to parents, schools find greater success with engaging parents in a productive relationship (Haynes, Comer, & Hamilton-Lee, 1989). Christenson and Sheridan (2001) stated that some school practices "fail" families. Common examples of school practices that tend to alienate families from schools include responding only in a crisis, labeling the family only by structure such as "single-parent families," and viewing families as "deficient." Schools often label parents or families by what they are failing to do as defined by the school's agenda. When educators form conclusions based on what schools believe families need and do not consider how families may be supporting the education of their children already, schools fail in building productive partnerships with the families. Bempechat (1998) and Edwards, Fear, and Gallego (1995) found that parents from diverse ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, linguistic, and educational backgrounds are truly involved in the lives of their children whether or not they are formally involved in their school life. Additionally, many families are involved in the

education of their children, but just not in ways that are considered involved by schools (Wright & Smith, 1998).

Although some gains have been realized in the number of Native American students graduating from high school since 1991, significant gaps still exist regarding performance of Native American students on key indicators of school success (U.S. Department of Education National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007). In public schools with 25 percent or greater enrollment of Native American students, school administrators have prioritized the lack of parent involvement as their number one serious school problem as reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and the National Indian Education Study (NIES) (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2007). Therefore, a need was identified by the Central Region Educational Laboratory to undertake a study to better understand parent involvement in education for Native American students (Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008).

Under the direction of the Central Region Educational Laboratory, a qualitative research project was conducted that held focus groups with Native American parents to gain an understanding of Native American perspectives on parental involvement in their children's education. The focus group sites were chosen from the Central Region of the Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning which includes Wyoming, Colorado, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri. Further, the sites were selected from geographically separated communities that each had more than 10,500 students and a "mid-sized city" locale classification. The parents involved in the focus groups included married parents, single parents, co-habitating partners, foster parents, and primary care grandmothers. Participating parents mentioned seven tribal affiliations

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and nine home reservations. The discussions for the focus groups centered on four research questions and the findings were reported by themes for each question:

1. What do American Indian parents perceive as parent involvement?
   - School-oriented involvement
     - Communicating about children.
     - Attending student-centered events.
     - Volunteering.
     - Advocating for their children.
   - Home-oriented involvement
     - Showing interest in children's education and life.
     - Helping with school work.
     - Encouraging and rewarding children to do their best.
     - Reading with children.
     - Meeting children's needs.
     - Involving the extended family and community.
2. Why do American Indian parents get involved?
   - To help children succeed and build confidence
   - To stay connected with the school.
   - To monitor children's progress.
   - To address a problem.
   - To respond to schools' invitation or welcoming environment.
3. What do parents perceive as barriers to involvement?
   - School-oriented barriers
     - Unwelcoming school environment (feeling unwelcome or intimidated at the school).
     - Previous negative experience with education (parents' own or their children's).
     - Perceptions of a school's lack of cultural sensitivity.
     - Different styles of interpersonal communication.
   - Home-oriented barriers
     - Experiencing scheduling, transportation, childcare, and financial difficulties.
4. Which school strategies do parents perceive encourage involvement?
   - Printed and electronic correspondence.
   - Communications about children.
   - School staff respectful of parents' educational and cultural values.
   - Open-door policy.
   - Culturally respectful environment.
   - Cultural activities and resources, including American Indian programs, resource centers, after school activities, clubs for children and families, and an advocate or liaison at the school to welcome and assist American Indian parents and children. (Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008, pp. iv - v).

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The study of Mackety and Linder-VanBerschot (2008) shows that Native American parents' perceptions of parental involvement in school and the kind of parental involvement that will help Native American children be successful in school follows the aspects of parental involvement noted in previous research studies, particularly those by Fan and Chen (2001) and Hong and Ho (2005). Native American parents are involved by participating in school events, volunteering, and advocating for their children. Native American parents are also involved by helping with homework, reading with their children, encouraging and rewarding their children to do their best, and showing interest in their educational progress.

According to Mackety and Linder-VanBerschot (2008), however, parent involvement is influenced by parent-school differences in values and communication styles. Barriers to positive parental involvement are created by unwelcoming or intimidating school environments, differences in interpersonal communication styles, and previous negative experiences with education. These barriers foster limited parental involvement for Native American children in schools. The history of education for Native Americans with the coercive assimilation policies of the boarding schools, and the perceptions of cultural competency in the staff and the curricula continue to influence parents and their involvement in the present educational environments of their children (Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008). The barriers to positive parental involvement for Native American families are important to understand because attempts to encourage family involvement may be ineffective without first addressing communication styles and meeting environments.

Curriculum

Curriculum is the content and skills which are taught in the educational programming of a school (Richards et al., 2005). According to Richards et al. (2005), what is taught in the school is a reflection of the values and disposition of the school. Curricula may be limited to a singular culture or broad enough to encompass many cultures. Curricula may reflect the historical contributions and perspectives of one group of peoples or that of many groups. A culturally relevant curriculum should be inclusive of all cultures and responsive to students from all cultures (Richards et al., 2005).

James Banks (2005) indicates a curriculum that focuses on a singular mainstream culture has negative consequences for both the mainstream culture and the minority cultures alike. A mainstream-centric curriculum is a way in which racism and ethnocentrism is perpetuated in our schools and in our society. A mainstream-centric curriculum gives mainstream students a false sense of superiority and a misleading conception of their relationship with other groups of people. A mainstream-centric curriculum denies the mainstream students a chance to benefit from the knowledge and understanding of diverse perspectives that can come from studying and experiencing differing cultures. For students from a minority culture, a mainstream-centric curriculum takes away from the minority experiences and cultures and fails to reflect the perspectives of the minority groups. According to Gutmann (2004), a mainstream-centric curriculum fails to provide social equity, which is an essential characteristic of a democratic institution, within the school.

According to Banks (2005), teachers need an in-depth knowledge about ethnic cultures, experiences, and points of view in order to integrate them into the curricula.

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Many teachers teach students that Columbus discovered the "new world" of America because they have little knowledge about the Native American groups that existed in American more than 40,000 years before the Europeans began settling there. The "Westward Movement" often taught in 5th grade U.S history is not seen that way from all perspectives. Black Elk, an Oglala Lakota holy man, viewed it more as an invasion coming from the east (Banks, 2005). Black Elk did not view his homeland as "The West" but instead saw his home as the center of the world. From his perspective, Black Elk received gifts from the Great Spirit from the four directions such as the cup of living water and the sacred bow from the West, and the daybreak star and the sacred pipe from the East (Black Elk's Prayer, 1964).

Recent curriculum controversy in Texas shows that textbooks and curricula can still be made to portray historical events in more positive or more negative light, depending on the perspective of the dominant group (Besen, 2010; Knickerbocker, 2010). The Texas State Board of Education voted to make changes to social studies curriculum and standards for Texas Public Schools that would, according to the supporters of the change, compensate for the liberal bias that has long pervaded education (Elfman, 2010). Dr. Clayborne Carson, professor of history at Stanford University expressed concern for the lack of guidance considered by the Texas State Board of Education when making such a change. Dr. Clayborne suggested that historians should be writing the history books, not members of the board of education (Elfman, 2010). Education Secretary Arne Duncan stated, "We do a disservice to children when we shield them from the truth, just because some people think it is painful or doesn't fit with their particular views" (Knickerbocker, 2010, "The Obama Administration Weighs In" para.1).

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According to Morgan (2010), traditional curricula have not portrayed Native Americans well. Public school curricula have been criticized for not including cultural contributions of Native Americans and for not representing Native American culture fairly and accurately. Fleming (2006) commented that most non-Indians don't know much about Native Americans and much of what they do know is wrong. In Montana, Indian Education for All (IEFA) will ensure that students in public schools in Montana will learn an accurate and authentic history of the state from all perspectives (Juneau, 2006). According to Juneau (2006), the law requires that all schools will teach all students about Montana's 12 tribes – their history, government systems, fine arts, oral traditions, and contemporary issues. Juneau (2006) is optimistic that Native Americans will see themselves depicted in the curriculum and will feel respected by the education system.

In her book, *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*, Lisa Delpit (1995) gives us guidance in educating all children.

> If we are to successfully educate all of our children, we must work to remove the blinders built of stereotypes, monocultural instructional methodologies, ignorance, social distance, biased research, and racism. We must work to destroy those blinders so that it is possible to really see, to really know the students we must teach. (p. 182)

Starnes (2006) supports the words of Delpit (1995) specifically with Native American students. According to Starnes, "solid teaching skills, good intentions, hard work, and loving kids just aren't enough. There is too much we don't know about teaching Native American children, and what we don't know definitely hurts them" (p. 385). It is important to integrate multicultural experiences and perspectives into the

curricula to show respect and give validity to all cultures in order to encourage
appropriate relationships among all racial/ethnic groups of people.

Starnes (2005) says when curriculum is culturally responsive or when the
curriculum emphasizes community, culture, and tradition, studies have shown that this
approach leads to increased student learning, higher test performance, and improvement
in other related indicators of school success. Sparks (2000) reports that incorporating
Native American culture into the classroom curriculum can enrich the learning
experiences of all students. A primary goal for creating success for Native American
students is to create a positive orientation both toward their own culture's role and the
dominant culture's role in society. Nel (1994) states that academic and social skill
instruction should be put in context of both the Native American culture and the
dominant culture. Sparks (2000) further suggests that teachers should learn as much as
possible about the specific Native American culture represented by the students in their
classrooms by:

- Reading books, articles, or other written information on local tribal practices

- Requesting tribal brochures or newsletters

- Attending powwows or other appropriate tribal events

- Searching internet resources

- Talking with tribal members, and

- Attending a tribal council meeting or a tribal school board meeting

In her research on how to promote school achievement among Native American students,
Powers (2005) suggests that teachers should incorporate native culture and content into
the curriculum while utilizing effective instruction techniques. Further, repeatedly

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assigning remedial activities which lack a cognitive and cultural emphasis is likely to decrease motivation for students to commit to those academic tasks (Powers, 2005). In her book about working with culturally diverse students, Cowhey (2006) shows that with creative teaching, students can engage in complex and meaningful learning activities while still working on basic skills debunking the notion that students must have those basic skills in place before they can benefit from more complex learning activities.

From 1996 to 2001, a project was implemented in the Zuni Public School District in New Mexico for the purpose of converting their school's teaching methods, organization, and curriculum to be more responsive to the needs of the Zuni students. This project was accomplished with assistance from the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) (Tharp et al., 2001). According to Tharp et al. (2001), the reform efforts focused specifically on localizing curriculum and pedagogy. Findings showed that students who received instruction in a culturally compatible way learned more mathematics, retained more of what they had learned, and had a greater improvement in attitudes toward mathematics than students who received more traditional mathematics instruction.

Banks (2005) identified four approaches to making curriculum more culturally responsive: the Contributions Approach, the Additive Approach, the Transformation Approach, and the Social Action Approach. Level one, or the Contributions Approach, focuses on celebrations, heroes, and other elements or artifacts related to a particular ethnic group. An example of this approach would be studying famous African Americans during African American month or celebrating Cinco de Mayo to learn about Mexican culture. This approach provides a quick and easy way to incorporate ethnic

content into the curriculum but it results in only a superficial understanding of the culture and most often, mainstream criteria has been used to determine what heroes or elements to include in the curriculum (Banks, 2005).

In level two, the Additive Approach, additional content, concepts, themes, or perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing the structure of the curriculum. An example of this approach would be adding a unit on Japanese American internment to a U.S. history course without emphasizing the Japanese in any other unit of study. This approach allows teachers to add ethnic content to the curriculum without significantly changing the curriculum structure and can be done without needing professional development time. This approach still tends to teach students to view ethnic groups from a Eurocentric perspective and fails to teach the interconnectedness of the dominant culture and other ethnic cultures (Banks, 2005).

The third level, the Transformation Approach, allows students to view events, issues, and concepts from a variety of diverse cultural, ethnic, and racial group perspectives. An example of this approach would be to create a unit of study on the American Revolution which describes the meaning of the revolution to Anglo revolutionists, Anglo loyalists, African Americans, Indians, and the British. This approach gives students a balanced view of the development of U.S. society and allows students from diverse cultures to see their own culture and perspective as part of the curriculum. It helps to empower victimized ethnic and racial groups. The difficulty with this approach is the need for staff development that is sufficient and on-going (Banks, 2005).

The Social Action Approach in level four enables students to improve their analysis, decision-making, and social action skills. With this approach, students are allowed to identify important social issues and research the issue to gain data, clarify their own values surrounding the issue, and take reflective actions to help resolve the issue. An example of this approach would be a study of discrimination and prejudice in school that would lead to students taking actions to improve race relations in the school. The difficulty with this approach is that it requires a large amount of planning and resources. A project such as this may stretch on longer than a more traditional unit of study and issues that may arise may be considered controversial by members of the staff and community (Banks, 2005).

Banks (2005) suggests that approaches to make curricula more culturally relevant are often blended in actual teaching settings. It would be unrealistic to expect a teacher to jump from using a mainstream-centric curriculum to a transformation or social action approach. Utilizing the Contributions Approach as a starting point and moving through the levels would make the transition to more culturally relevant curriculums more gradual and cumulative (Banks, 2005).

<center>Organization of Learning</center>

The organization of learning involves what happens in the classroom (Richards et al., 2005). This includes activities for teaching and learning, decisions about what is taught and how it will be taught, criteria for assessment of learning, and behavior management. Teachers play a major role in establishing this setting. In a culturally responsive classroom, learning activities, content, assessment, and student relationships will reflect understanding and respect for diversity (Richards et al. 2005).

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Rommetveit (1979), in his study of human communication, emphasized that any situation, event, or object had many possible interpretations. Rommetveit (1979) described human inter-subjectivity as a problem in communication because there is always a "question concerning in what sense and under what conditions two persons who engage in a dialogue can transcend their different private worlds" (p. 7). Vygotsky (1981) concurred, theorizing that in thinking and learning, people have systems that work together to help make meaning and that these systems develop within cultures in ways that can change mental functions so that they differ from culture to culture. Vygotsky (1981) described the notion of situation definition, or the way in which objects and events in a situation are defined. The characterization of this notion allows that interlocutors, or negotiators of meaning may differ, thus changing the definition of the same set of objects and events. When interlocutors approach an object or event with differing situation definitions, inter-subjectivity exists.

Winzer and Mazurek (1998) furthered the idea of inter-subjectivity stating that the thinking and learning processes of children are deeply embedded within their own culture. When there is a mismatch of a child's culture to that of the teacher, difficulties in classroom learning and interactions may occur. Thus, cultural socialization influences how students learn. Cultural socialization influences how students respond to curricular materials, instructional strategies, learning tasks, and communication patterns (Kanu, 2006).

Culture can be defined and perceived in many ways. In 2002, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), in the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, described culture as follows:

> Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art, literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs. (UNESCO, 2002, p. 142)

Further, in Article 5 of the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, it states that, "all persons should be entitled to quality education and training that fully respect their cultural identity" (UNESCO, 2002, p. 142). The report from UNESCO frames an important question. Are educators providing a quality education that fully respects the cultural identity of each student? If not, what should be done differently to ensure there is equity in education?

Culture is a social process that determines what we believe, how we think, how we behave, and how we give order and meaning to our lives. "Culture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education, whether that is curriculum, instruction, administration or performance assessment" (Gay, 2000, p. 8). Spindler and Spindler (1994) explain how the culture of the teacher and the culture of the student both affect the educational process.

> Teachers carry into the classroom their personal cultural background. They perceive students, all of whom are cultural agents, with inevitable prejudice and preconception. Students likewise come to school with personal cultural backgrounds that influence their perceptions of teachers, other students, and the school itself. Together students and teachers construct, mostly without being conscious of doing it, an environment of meanings enacted in individual and group behaviors, of conflict and accommodations, rejection and acceptance, alienation and withdrawal. (p. xii)

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The development of educational structures in America has always been from the cultural framework primarily of European and middle-class origins (Gay, 2000). Schooling or formal education, then, has become learning how to read, write, and think in certain ways with certain values and certain formats. These formats or conditions have become the proper practices in education that match with the European, middle-class way of thinking and offer a particular advantage to students who come from that culture (Boykin, 1994; Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 1999; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003).

Due to the European, middle-class culture found in most American schools and the fact that schools in America are becoming increasingly diverse, cultures of schools do not always match that of their students. This mismatch of cultural expectations can inhibit student achievement because the way the student is used to performing tasks and processing information is different from the expected processes (Spindler & Spindler, 1994; Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 1999; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003).

The inability of a culturally diverse student to demonstrate knowledge and understanding may be due to these differences in expectations rather than cognitive ability. Therefore, teachers must understand the differences and inconsistencies between cultural expectations in order to create the connections for the culturally diverse learner (Gay, 2000). "Congruency between how the educational process is ordered and delivered, and the cultural frames of reference of diverse students will improve school achievement for students of color" (Gay, 2000, p. 12).

In the late 1960's, research efforts began in an effort to understand cultural differences and the inequitable educational experiences of minority students in U.S. public schools (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). From this research, a cultural styles approach

to learning was derived that served as an alternative to the deficit-model approach in which cultural differences from the practices of the minority group were thought of as inferior. According to Gutierrez and Rogoff (2003), this cultural styles approach was characterized by describing cultural ways of different groups in a respectful manner without making value judgments or suggesting a hierarchy of value in any particular cultural practice.

Guitierrez and Rogoff (2003) assert that the study of cultural variation in approaches to learning has evolved. Researchers and educators must not assume that general traits of individuals can be attributed to people of ethnic group membership. The regularities found among ethnic groups are ever changing. Rather, Guitierrez and Rogoff (2003) recommend a cultural-historical approach which focuses attention on individual and group experiences in cultural activities and practices not in their individual traits. Guitierrez and Rogoff (2003) further note that trying to locate cultural difference within individuals and referring to them as diverse leads to the implication that others are standard which normalizes the dominant group. The concept of a cultural disconnect is important to consider in the study of education for students from diverse cultures because if what is taught is not in a meaningful frame of reference for the learner, learning will be limited.

Demmert (2005), in his study of the influence of culture on learning and assessment of Native American students, showed that limited background and experiential knowledge can impact an assessment of competence making it seem that cognitive skills are impaired when, in reality, those skills simply had not been developed. Demmert did this by showing photos of Tlingit petroglyphs and pictographs that few,

without more opportunity to learn, could interpret or understand. Demmert compares this to assessing Native American children without knowing their language limits, their cultural backgrounds, or the environment from which they gained their experiences and attitudes regarding their life-situations. Demmert also suggests six considerations that must be made when assessing Native American students:

> (1) the language of the home and the language of instruction, (2) the context and perspective from which questions are asked, (3) compatability between the background knowledge of the student and the questions asked of the student, (4) the values and priorities of the community(ies) from which the students come, (5) the ability of the assessor to create an atmosphere in which the students feel safe and comfortable, and (6) the vocabulary of the student and whether he or she understands the meaning of the words used in the assessment tool. (p. 21)

Classroom Achievement and Assessment.

Achievement gap is defined as "…the statistical phenomenon of predictable lower performance on standardized tests by African-American, Hispanic, Native American, and low-income students as compared to their white, Asian, and more economically advantaged peers" (Benett et al., 2004, p. 41). Superintendents of large urban districts have listed the issue of achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students as one of their major problems (Huang, Reiser, Parker, Muniec, & Salvucci. 2003; Klein et al., 2010). In a manifesto written for *The Washington Post* by a cadre of America's foremost school leaders, the achievement gap still exists as one of the major problems facing public education today (Klein et al., 2010). The manifesto implies that the crisis in public education is a problem for all of us, because until the schools are fixed, the achievement gap will continue to grow and the United States will fall further behind the rest of the industrialized world in education (Klein et al., 2010). Data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) continues to show the existence of

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achievement gaps for certain ethnic-minority student populations (U. S. Department of Education, 2007 & 2009).

The achievement gap in mathematics achievement between White and Native American students in grades 4 and 8 as measured by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has not decreased over the last 10 years (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, Table 7, Appendix C). Since 2003, the gap between White students and Native American students in 4th grade has remained constant at a difference of 20 points in each of the reported years. During the same time, the gap between White students and Native American students in 8th grade has increased from a 25 point gap to a 27 point gap. The achievement gap in reading achievement as measured by NAEP over the last decade shows a similar pattern to that of mathematics achievement (U.S. Department of Education, 2008, Table 8, Appendix C,). The gap in reading scores has, in fact, grown slightly in both 4th grade and 8th grade since the reported scores of 2002.

Group differences show up in other measures of academic success, too. Some of these measures include: grades, educational aspirations, ability grouping or tracking of students, high school completion, college transition, and college completion (Kao & Thompson, 2003). These gaps in measures of success across the board are important considerations as they are indicators that the minority status of Native American students is perpetuated throughout life and the cycle of lower socio-economic status, lower expectations, and fewer life achievements will repeat itself generation after generation.

According to Powers (2005), lack of achievement resulting in school failure for Native American students seems to be acquired rather than inherent at the beginning of a student's schooling. Studies conducted between 1984 and 1994 indicated that Native

American students achieve academically at an average rate until about the 4th grade; by 10th grade, they are an average of 3 years behind their White peers (Hornett, 1990; Rampaul, Singh, & Didyk, 1984; Safran, Safran, & Pirozak, 1994). More recent studies, however, indicate that a gap now exists upon kindergarten entry. A 2005 report from Mississippi State University states that rural Native American and Alaska Native children were least likely of ethnic sub-groups to be proficient in letter recognition when they start school (Miller, 2005). According to the Montana Office of Public Instruction, average White students start school with a vocabulary of fifteen thousand words, while the average Native American child starts school with a vocabulary of about three thousand words (Miller, 2005).

High school dropout rates and graduation rates also show significant gaps by race/ethnicity. For example, Native Americans are significantly more likely than White students to drop out of school (Kao & Thompson, 2003). According to Zehr (2010), a report released by the Civil Rights Project of the University of California, Los Angeles stated that fewer than half of the Native American students graduate from high school. South Dakota reported the lowest rate of graduation for Native American students at 30%. Calculations by the South Dakota State Department of Education show the graduation rate from public schools for all students in South Dakota in 2009 was 89.21%. Nearly 92% of White students graduated while only 66% of Native American students graduated in 2009 (SD Department of Education, 2009b).

Behavior Management

Student discipline and behavior management continues to be a major concern in public schools (Brown & Becket, 2006). Research has shown gaps between minority

student groups and that of White students (Skiba et al., 2008). Krezmien, Leone, and Achilles (2006) looked at statewide suspension data from 1995 to 2003 in Maryland and found that Native American students as well as African American students were more likely to be suspended from school than were their White counterparts. An example of disparity in disciplinary measures was shown in one school district with a large diverse population where 50% of the African American males and 33% of the African American females were given out-of-school suspensions as a disciplinary measure during one school year as compared to 25% of White males and 9.3% of White females during the same period (Raffaele Mendez & Knoff, 2003). The U. S. Department of Education (2006a) reports that in South Dakota, Native American students make up about 12% of the student population, but account for 30% of the out-of-school suspensions, and 62% of expulsions. That compares with White students who make up 83% of the student population while accounting for 60% of the out-of-school suspensions, and 34% of expulsions. This discrepancy in disciplinary action is important when looking at N. American student achievement because it creates a significant amount of time that students are excluded from instruction which could, in turn, limit their achieve.

According to Brown and Becket (2006), research over the past 35 years has shown disciplinary policies that are clearly understood by students, parents, and teachers, and are consistently enforced by school administrators create school environments with significantly fewer behavioral disruptions. For example, in the Cincinnati Public School District, disruptive behaviors leading to suspension and expulsion were significantly reduced by building consensus among all stakeholders during the development and implementation of the code of behavior across the district (Brown & Becket, 2006).

Special Education Pre-referral and Referral
Processes and Programs

According to Richards, et al. (2005), special education referral processes can be very complex. Public educators are charged with providing adequate and appropriate educational opportunities to all students even before referral for special education services begins. In order for educational opportunities to be adequate and appropriate, they must include culturally responsive practices throughout the implementation of interventions and assessments. This is critical because minority students are often disproportionately represented in special education services (Donovan & Cross, 2002; Harry & Klingner, 2006).

In South Dakota, disproportionality is explained as the comparisons made between groups of students by race or ethnicity who are identified for special education services. If students from particular racial or ethnic groups are identified at a greater or lesser rate than all other students, that group can be said to be disproportionately represented in special education (South Dakota Department of Education, 2008). According to Artiles and Bal (2008), such disproportionate representation of minority students in special education has been discussed across the country for forty years. The over and underrepresentation occurs in the high-incidence categories such as specific learning disabilities, cognitive disabilities, and emotional disturbance (Artiles & Bal, 2008). Nationally, male, low-income African American and Native American students have been the most affected by overrepresentation in special education services (Donovan & Cross, 2002). According to the U.S. Department of Education (2006b), nationally, Native American students made up slightly over 1% of the student population

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and they accounted for about 1.5% of the students who were eligible for special education in the categories of cognitive disability, emotional disturbance, and specific learning disability. More significantly, in South Dakota, Native American students made up about 12% of the student population. However, in South Dakota, Native American students represented nearly 21% of the students who were eligible for special education services in the categories of cognitive disability, emotional disturbance, and specific learning disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2006a).

In South Dakota, the determination of disproportionality is mathematically determined by the calculation of a Weighted Risk Ratio. A Weighted Risk Ratio of 2.00 and above is considered overrepresentation in special education services (Flor & Cain, 2006). A Weighted Risk Ratio is determined by first calculating the risk for each racial group by dividing the total number of students identified for special education services from a particular racial group by the total number of students from that racial group enrolled in the school. The risk of the particular racial group is then divided by the calculated risk of the White group. The result is the Weighted Risk Ratio (Flor & Cain, 2006). When the base-line data was collected in 2005-2006, 21 South Dakota school districts were initially identified as disproportionate in the category of Specific Learning Disability, four of these districts were identified in the category of Speech, two districts were identified in the category of Emotionally Disturbed, and two districts were identified in the category of Cognitive Disability (SD Department of Education, 2008a).

According to Artiles and Bal (2008), the argument exists that minority students are placed in special education in disproportionate numbers because the achievement level of the minority students is significantly lower than that of the White students.

Artiles and Bal (2008) state, however, that this is an oversimplified view of the problem that fails to consider whether the documented achievement gaps were produced by the structural inequalities instead of by student deficits. Additionally, this oversimplified view fails to question the possibility of bias in assessment tools (Artiles & Bal, 2008).

Harry and Klingner (2006) found that opportunity to learn or lack thereof presented a powerful explanation of the educational outcomes for many minority students. Student achievement is linked to the opportunity to learn through more time and access to instruction, a greater connection of instruction of curriculum to what is assessed, and increased on-task behavior in the classroom (Brophy, 1986; Lee, 1982; Keogh & Speece, 1996; Harry & Klingner, 2006). As stated by Harry and Klingner (2006),

> when a child has not had sufficient opportunity to learn, the determination cannot be made that she has a learning disability. Unfortunately, the classroom context is seldom taken into account as a source of children's learning and behavioral difficulties and is readily forgotten as soon as the search for intrinsic disability begins. (p. 67)

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the literature regarding each domain of school systems that influence cultural responsiveness in school systems as described by *Equity in Special Education Placement: A Self-assessment Guide for Culturally Responsive Practices* (Richards et al., 2005). Those domains are: School Governance, Organization, Policy, and Climate; Family Involvement; Curriculum; Organization of Learning; and Special Education Referrals and Processes. Since the proposed study focused on Native American achievement, the lens through which each domain was viewed included Native American studies and experiences to the extent possible.

Each domain presented important considerations for the education of Native American students in our schools:

1. School Governance, Organization, Policy, and Climate

   a. In a school with an effective leader, all students, including Native American students will experience quality learning opportunities (Harry & Klingner, 2006);

   b. If Native American students are provided with effective teachers consistently, their academic success will increase (Harry & Klingner, 2006);

   c. A shared governance approach could increase participation by all stakeholders offering opportunity to create perspectives respectful to all cultures and increasing buy-in to school improvement efforts (Meyers et al., 2001) ;

   d. An inferior quality of education cannot be tolerated for Native American students. High expectations must be in place for all students (Kozol, 2005) ;

   e. Providing supporting and caring adults in schools can positively impact the school success of Native American students (Wooley & Bowen, 2007).

2. Family Involvement

   a. Family involvement practices that impact student achievement for Native American students may be different from the practices that impact student achievement from White students (Mackety & Linder-VanBerschot, 2008).

b. Barriers such as communication styles and intimidating meeting environments may limit the family involvement for Native American students (Christenson, 2003).

3. Curriculum

   a. It is important to integrate Native American experiences and perspectives into the curriculum to show respect and give validity to the Native American culture (Powers, 2005).

4. Organization of Learning

   a. Cultural disconnect between teacher and learner is an important consideration in instruction, because if what is taught is not put in a meaningful frame of reference for the learner, learning will be limited (Gay, 2000; Demmert, 2005);

   b. The discrepancy in disciplinary actions creates a significant amount of time that Native American students are excluded from instruction compared to their White counterparts (Skiba et al., 2008).

5. Special Education Referrals and Processes

   a. Native Americans in South Dakota are about twice as likely to participate in special education programs in the high incidence categories as are White students (U.S. Department of Education, 2006a).

The methods and design of the study are presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Minority student populations in schools are rapidly increasing (Garfield et al., 2003; Kao & Thompson, 2003). Research suggests that there still exists a significant achievement gap between less advantaged minority groups such as Native Americans and the more advantaged White student population (U.S. Department of Education, 2008a, 2008b). In addition to lower academic achievement, Native American and other minority students are over-represented in special education services (Harry & Klingner, 2006).

The purpose of this study was to assess the level of reported culturally responsive practices of South Dakota elementary schools with significant populations of Native American students and to assess how culturally responsive practices are associated with Native American student achievement. In particular, this study investigated the relationships, based on the perceptions of the school counselor for each elementary school in the study, among each indicator of cultural responsiveness and indicators of school academic success for Native American students and identified participation levels of Native American students in special education programs.

The indicators of cultural responsiveness were described in the self-assessment created by the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems titled *Equity in Special Education Placement: A School Self-Assessment Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice*. This assessment is designed to address school issues that may

impact the underachievement, the lack of school success, and the disproportionate representation of culturally diverse students in special education (Richards et al., 2005). Because the issues that may account for underachievement, lack of school success, and disproportionate representation of culturally diverse students in special education occur for multiple reasons and exist at all levels of the educational system, the self-assessment is based on a multi-dimensional model (Richards et al., 2005). The self-assessment guide provides a framework for evaluating knowledge, skills, and dispositions in the following five domains: 1) School Governance, Organization, Policy and Climate, 2) Family Involvement, 3) Curriculum, 4) Organization of Learning, and 5) Special Education Referral Processes and Programs. The five domains are based on instruments developed by the following groups: Assembly of Native Educator Associations, Center for Multicultural Education, National Association for Bilingual Education, and National Alliance of Black School Educators (Richards et al., 2005).

The indicators of academic success analyzed were those found on each school's Report Card on the South Dakota State Department of Education website for the 2007-2008 school year which included: attendance rates, percentage of students in grades 3 through 5 scoring proficient or above in math on the Dakota-State Test of Educational Progress (Dakota-STEP), and percentage of students in grades 3 through 5 scoring proficient or above in reading on the Dakota-STEP.

Attendance rates, in addition to South Dakota's standardized math and reading achievement tests, the Dakota-STEP, were used as an indicator of academic/school success. Attendance rates were used as a measure of academic success because research studies have shown that the more a student attends classes, the less chance they have of

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failing academic assessments (McFadden, 2008; Newman-Ford, Fitzgibbon, Lloyd, & Thomas, 2008).

The research questions that guided this study were: 1) "What is the participation rate of Native American students in special education programs compared to that of their White counterparts?" 2) "To what degree do culturally responsive behaviors in the areas of School governance, organization, policy and climate; Family involvement; Curriculum; Organization of learning; and Special education referral process and programs predict the academic success of Native American students as measured by the percent of Native American students scoring proficient/advanced in reading, the percent scoring proficient/advanced in math, and the percent school attendance rate?"

Participants

The sample for this study was drawn from the group of public elementary schools in South Dakota that serve populations of Native American students with n-size as determined by No Child Left Behind to be of adequate size to be publically reported as a sub-group. The n-size in this case for Native Americans was a minimum of 10 students per school building. There were 294 public elementary schools in South Dakota of which 63 met the criteria of the minimum n-size for participation. From those schools that volunteered to participate in the study, each of the school counselors was asked to complete a self-assessment survey of his or her school's cultural responsiveness.

Instrument

The instrument used to collect data to determine the level of cultural responsiveness of education systems was *Equity in Special Education Placement: A School Self-Assessment Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice* developed by the

National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt). Permission was obtained from Elaine Mulligan, the Program Coordinator for NCCRESt at Arizona State University for its use and a copy of the instrument is found in Appendix A. This self-assessment tool provided participants with a total score indicative of relative strength or weakness in each of the following five domains: 1) school governance, organization policy and climate, 2) family involvement, 3) curriculum, 4) organization of learning, 5) and special education referral process and programs.

The format of the self-assessment was altered to make a more user friendly survey for completion by elementary school counselors. The demographics section was placed at the end of the survey to encourage school counselors to complete the survey questions before coming upon a section that asked for data to which a school counselor might not have easy access. Additionally, the self-assessment tool which was converted into a survey was originally designed to be completed by a team of 5 to 10 stakeholders including the principal, representative teachers, school support staff, and community members in order to obtain multiple perspectives on the effectiveness of a school.

According to the Elaine Mulligan, previously the program coordinator for NCCRESt and now the present project coordinator for the National Institute for Urban School Improvement (NIUSI), the principal investigators using the self-assessment tool *Equity in Special Education Placement: A School Self-Assessment Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice* were unable to complete the validity studies on this tool before funding ended on NCCRESt. Although no validity studies were available, many State Department of Education websites provide a link to this assessment as a tool to address disproportionality. The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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requires the use of *Equity in Special Education Placement: A School Self-Assessment Guide for Culturally Responsive Practice* as Step 1 of the process when a school has been flagged for disproportionality (Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2009, "Significant Disproportionality Review Process," para. 2).

Parts I, II, and III of the instrument, collectively make up Domain 1: School Governance, Organization, Policy and Climate. This domain collected information about the general administration of the school, and this domain included constructs such as policies and reforms that are indicative of how the school is governed as well as attitudes and perceptions within the school.

Part IV of the instrument, Family Involvement, makes up Domain 2. This domain looked at the perception of families as valued partners of the school. The indicators of evaluation looked at how actively the school works at ensuring the families are informed and involved in the school and their children's education.

Part V of the instrument, Curriculum, makes up Domain 3. This domain considered how well the teachings in the school indicate the values and disposition of the school system. This section identified the scope of the curriculum, whether the curriculum reflected the history, contributions, and perspectives of one group in society or that of many groups.

Parts VI, VII, and VIII of the instrument, Teaching and Learning, Classroom Achievement and Assessment, and Behavior Management collectively make up Domain 4. This domain looked more specifically at the counselor's perceptions of what the teachers do in the classroom. Components identified through this lens included: what

knowledge is important, how that important knowledge is taught, criteria of achievement, methods of assessment, and classroom behavior management.

Part IX of the instrument, Special Education Pre-Referral and Referral Processes provided a score for Domain 5. This domain investigated the appropriateness of pre-referral interventions and strategies as part of a culturally responsive referral process.

Lastly, Part X of the instrument was the demographics section and asked for the total number of students from each ethnic or racial background in the school. This section also requested the total number of students from each ethnic or racial background who were identified to receive special education services. This information allowed the researcher to calculate the proportion of Native American students identified for special education for each participating school.

Each part of the instrument, except the demographics section, used a scoring rubric to rate the school counselors' perceptions of the cultural responsiveness of their schools. The scoring rubric consisted of the scores of 3 = *almost always*, occurs more than 75% of the time; 2 = *frequently*, occurs 50 to 74% of the time; 1 = *sometimes*, s 26 to 49% of the time; 0 = *almost never*, occurs 25% or less of the time; and *not applicable*, does not apply to their school. The scores for the questions in each domain were added together for a cumulative score for each domain. A percentage score was calculated for each domain by dividing the total score for a domain by the total possible score for that domain. Each percentage was charted on a scale to show relative strengths and weaknesses. Domains falling at or above 75% were considered strengths and those falling at or below 25% were viewed as weaknesses. Those falling between

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26% and 74% were considered to be of average adequacy, or considered neither a strength nor a weakness as determined by the self-assessment survey.

Procedure

To determine the schools that were eligible to participate in this study, the researcher viewed the Report Card for 2007-2008 of each public school in South Dakota located on the South Dakota Department of Education website to verify which schools were required to report on the achievement of Native American students as an individual subgroup. Due to the n-size requirement for participation, only 63 schools were eligible to participate. A permission letter was sent to the superintendent of each of the 63 eligible districts. Forty-three superintendents gave permission for the elementary school counselors in those districts to be invited to participate in the survey.

Once permission was obtained, the survey assessment was mailed to the school counselor in each of the 43 participating districts. The surveys were coded to identify each non-respondent so that a follow-up email could be sent or a phone call made to encourage participation. An email reminder was sent out to each of the respondents ten days following the mailing. After an additional ten days, 27 responses had been returned. Email reminders were once again sent out and phone calls were made to the remaining 16 participating districts. Another seven responses were received following the second reminder contact. Thirty-four respondents for a response rate of 64% completed the survey. A thank you letter was sent to each participant.

Participating schools were not identified individually in the data analysis; rather all data were reported as group data only. The surveys will be kept on file with the researcher for three years after which time they will be destroyed.

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Data Analysis

Weighted Odds Ratios were calculated using the information provided on the demographic portion of the survey. Only 23 of the 34 survey respondents completed this part of the survey. This calculation was made to determine the participation level of Native American students in special education programs compared to that of their White counterparts. The school district data used to make the relationship analysis was the percent of Native American students scoring proficient or advanced on the Dakota Step Assessment in both math and reading and the percent of attendance for Native American students in grades 3, 4, and 5. This information was found on each district's Report Card for 2007-2008 on the state website.

Data collected from the completed surveys were tabulated and analyzed to show the relationship of culturally responsive behaviors to indicators of success. An Excel table was created providing a cell where the response for each question was entered for each respondent. A period was placed in the cells where there was no response or the question was marked "not applicable". No surveys were discarded due to incompletion.

Frequencies and descriptive analysis were run using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to determine the appropriateness of the data. SPSS was the program chosen because it is among the most widely used programs for statistical analysis in the social sciences and is frequently used by education researchers (Answers.com, 2011, "SPSS", para.1). Simple regression tests were run using SPSS to determine the relationship of the level of culturally responsive behaviors in:

1. School governance, organization, policy and climate to the percent of Native American students scoring proficient/advanced in reading and math and the percent of Native American student school attendance rate;

2. Family involvement to the percent of Native American students scoring proficient/advanced in reading and math and the percent of Native American student school attendance rate;

3. Curriculum to the percent of Native American students scoring proficient/advanced in reading and math and the percent of Native American student school attendance rate;

4. Organization of learning to the percent of Native American students scoring proficient/advanced in reading and math and the percent of Native American student school attendance rate; and

5. Special education referral process and programs to the percent of Native American students scoring proficient/advanced in reading and math and the percent of Native American student school attendance rate.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The previous chapters have introduced the concept of cultural relevancy in educational settings, described the elements of a culturally responsive educational system, reviewed the relevant literature, and detailed the methodology of this study. Chapter four will analyze the data that was obtained through this research study.

The achievement gap between minority students and White students continues to be problematic in our nation's schools (U.S. Department of Education, 2009). The lack of appropriate and equitable opportunity to learn due to cultural differences may impact the continued gap and the disproportionate number of students referred and identified for special education services (Harry & Klingner, 2006). According to Gay (2000), since how one speaks, thinks, and writes reflects the culture from which he or she came, thereby affecting academic performance, aligning instruction to cultural learning styles, curriculums, and procedures will improve student learning. Gay (2000) suggests that Culturally Relevant Educational Systems (CRES) may be a solution to the lagging academic achievement of minority students.

This doctoral dissertation research study is a quantitative research that surveyed elementary school counselors from school districts in South Dakota. This study was accomplished by collecting survey data from 34 elementary school counselors, all of whom served in elementary schools with at least ten Native American students in their

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testing population. The results of this study have the potential to inform educators about practices of cultural responsiveness that may improve learning and increase academic achievement for minority students, specifically Native American students.

Results

The results section of this study is divided into three main sections. The first section reports the demographic data regarding the participating schools in the study. The second section presents the data obtained from the study as they relate to the research questions. A summary completes the results section.

Demographic Data

Sixty-three public schools in South Dakota met the criteria for inclusion in this study. Of these 63 schools, permission for participation from the superintendent of the district was received from 43 schools. Of the 43 schools to which a survey was sent, elementary counselors from 34 of the schools responded to the survey. Of the 34 responses, 23 completed demographic sections from which a disproportionality Weighted Odds Ratio could be calculated.

Research Question 1

Figure 1 shows calculated Weighted Odds Ratios of 23 of the participating schools for which demographic data was provided. Of these 23 schools, 11 had a calculated Weighted Odds Ratio of less than two. Ten of the schools had a calculated Weighted Odds Ratio falling between two and four. Two of the schools had calculated Weighted Odds Ratios greater than 10. The mode of the calculated Weighted Odds Ratios was 1.1. The median was 2.25, and the mean was 2.99. When the two outliers

from participating schools number eighteen and nineteen were taken out, the median was 1.8 and the mean was 2.03. This is significant because the average among all the reporting schools and would still have a Weighted Odds Ratio high enough to be flagged for disproportionality. This Weighted Odds Ratio of over 2.0 matches the research report from the U.S. Department of Education (2006b) which indicated that although Native American students make up less than 12% of the student population, they represent nearly 21% of the student participating in the high incidence categories of special education.
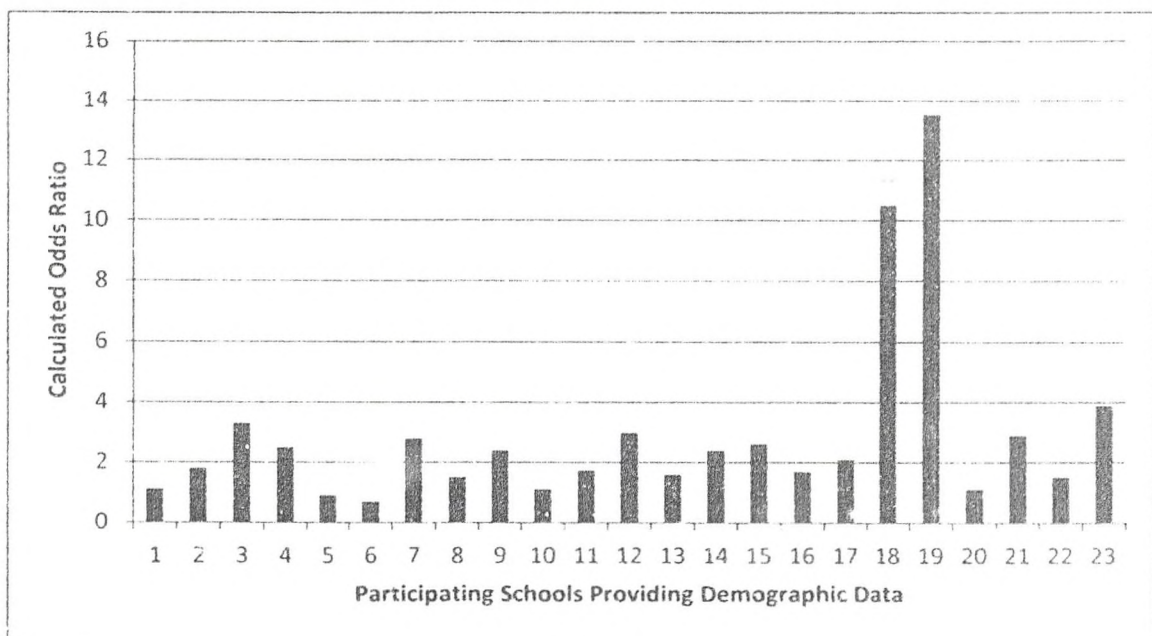
Figure 1. Calculated Weighted Odds Ratios.

Internal Consistency and Reliability

To determine the reliability of the school counselor ratings of each domain and the internal consistency or relationship between each domain, Cronbach's alpha

(reliability) and Pearson Correlation Coefficients were run. The results are provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Correlation of Subscale Constructs and Measures of Internal Consistency.

Sub Scale	D1	D2	D3	D4	Cronbach Alpha
D1 School Governance, Organization, Policy, Climate					.952
D2 Family Involvement	.15				.897
D3 Curriculum	.73	.14			.931
D4 Organization of Learning	.65	.14	.70		.970
D5 SPED Referral and Processes	.66	.13	.45	.65	.904

The results indicate that the overall reliability of the survey is good with Cronbach alpha for each domain at .897 or greater. The Pearson Correlation Coefficients show that Domain 2, Family Involvement has a very low correlation with each of the other domains while each of the other domains are more closely related with Domain 3, (Curriculum) and Domain 1, (School Governance, Organization, Policy, and Climate) having the highest correlation.

Research Question 2

The relationships analyzed in this research study included culturally responsive behaviors in the areas of (1) School Governance, Organization, Policy and Climate; (2) Family Involvement; (3) Curriculum; (4) Organization of Learning; and (5) Special Education Referral Process and Programs and how well each area would predict the

academic success of Native American students in public elementary schools in South Dakota using the academic success indicators of standardized math scores, standardized reading scores, and school attendance rates.

Table 2 presents the amount of explanation culturally responsive behaviors in the area of School Gov. . . , , Policy, and Climate have on Native American student achievement as measured by percent proficient in reading ($t = -0.421$, $R^2 = .005$, $p = .677$), percent proficient in math ($t = -3.346$, $R^2 = .259$, $p = .002*$), and school attendance

Variable	B	SE(B)	t	r	R^2	Sig.(p)
Reading	-0.052	0.124	-0.421	.074	.005	.677
Math	-0.397	0.119	-3.346	.509	.259	.002*
Attendance	-0.011	0.014	-0.784	.137	.019	.439

rates ($t = -0.784$, $R^2 = .01$ ‘ $p = .439$).

Table 2. Domain 1 – School Governance, Policy, Climate.
*$p < .05$

The analysis revealed a negative correlation between the math achievement of Native American students and culturally responsive behaviors in the area of School governance and organization, policy, and climate. Further, the correlation between the reading achievement and attendance of Native American students and culturally responsive behaviors in the area of School governance and organization, policy, and climate showed no significant relationship.

Table 3 presents the amount of explanation culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Family Involvement have on Native American student achievement as measured

by percent proficient in reading ($t = -1.447$, $R^2 = .061$, $p = .158$), percent proficient in math ($t = -2.8811$, $R^2 = .206$, $p = .007*$), and school attendance rates ($t = -0.576$, $R^2 = .010$, $p = .569$). The survey results once again indicated a negative correlation between the math achievement of Native American students and culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Family Involvement. The correlation between the reading achievement and attendance of Native American students and culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Family Involvement showed no significant relationship.

Table 3. Domain 2 – Family Involvement.

Variable	B	SE(B)	t	r	R^2	Sig.(p)
Reading	-0.142	0.098	-1.447	.248	.061	.158
Math	-0.287	0.100	-2.8811	.454	.206	.007*
Attendance	-0.007	0.012	-0.576	.101	.010	.569

*$p < .05$

Table 4 presents the amount of explanation culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Curriculum have on Native American student achievement as measured by percent proficient in reading ($t = 0.334$, $R^2 = .003$, $p = .740$), percent proficient in math ($t = -1.209$, $R^2 = .044$, $p = .236$), and school attendance rates ($t = -0.582$, $R^2 = .010$, $p = .564$).

The analysis revealed no significant relationship between culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Curriculum and the math and reading achievement and attendance of Native American students.

Table 4. Domain 3 – Curriculum.

Variable	B	SE(B)	t	r	R^2	Sig.(p)
Reading	0.031	0.094	0.334	.059	.003	.740
Math	-0.123	0.102	-1.209	.209	.044	.236
Attendance	-0.006	0.011	-0.582	.102	.010	.564

*$p < .05$

Table 5 presents the amount of explanation culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Organization of Learning have on Native American student achievement as measured by percent proficient in reading ($t = 1.438$, $R^2 = .061$, $p = .160$), percent proficient in math ($t = -0.715$, $R^2 = .016$, $p = .480$), and school attendance rates ($t = -0.347$, $R^2 = .004$, $p = .730$).

Table 5. Domain 4 - Organization of Learning

Variable	B	SE(B)	t	r	R^2	Sig.(p)
Reading	0.173	0.120	1.438	.264	.061	.160
Math	-0.098	0.136	-0.715	.125	.016	.480
Attendance	-0.005	0.015	-0.347	.061	.004	.730

*$p < .05$

The survey results showed no significant relationship between culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Organization of Learning and the math and reading achievement and attendance of Native American students.

Table 6 presents the amount of explanation culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Special Education Referral and Processes have on Native American student achievement as measured by percent proficient in reading ($t = -0.014$, $R^2 = .000$, $p = .989$), percent proficient in math ($t = -1.951$, $R^2 = .106$, $p = .060$), and school attendance rates ($t = -0.260$, $R^2 = .002$, $p = .796$). The data analysis showed no significant relationship between culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Special Education referral processes and programs and the math and reading achievement and attendance of Native American students.

Table 6. Domain 5 – Special Education Referral and Processes.

Variable	B	SE(B)	t	r	R^2	Sig.(p)
Reading	-0.001	0.088	-0.014	.002	.000	.989
Math	-0.179	0.092	-1.951	.326	.106	.060
Attendance	-0.003	0.010	-0.260	.046	.002	.796

*$p < .05$

Summary

This chapter contained the results of the survey of culturally relevant educational systems in quantitative terms. Weighted Risk Ratios were reported to indicate the level of participation of Native American students in special education programs. Cronbach's alpha, correlation coefficients, and simple regressions were used to report relationships between the cultural responsiveness of educational systems in each of five domains and the indicators of Native American student success.

The results indicate that overall, there is no evidence that higher levels of cultural responsiveness within school systems will produce greater student achievement as measured by math and reading test scores and school attendance. Although the results show no evidence, however, that does not mean there is not a relationship. Two domains, School Governance, Policy, and Climate and Family Involvement, showed a negative relationship with math achievement and no significant relationship with the reading achievement and attendance. The remaining three domains, Curriculum, Organization of Learning, and Special Education Referral Procedures and Processes showed no evidence of a significant relationship with any of the indicators of success.

Chapter V includes a summary, discussion, conclusions, and recommendations for further study regarding culturally responsive educational systems.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V contains discussion and conclusions drawn from the results of the information gathered. Additionally, there are recommendations for further research regarding culturally responsive educational systems and their impact on student achievement. The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationships among the indicators of cultural responsiveness and the indicators of school academic success of Native American students in public elementary schools in South Dakota.

Discussion

As reported in Table 1 in Chapter IV, the overall reliability of the survey is good with a Chronbach alpha of each domain at .897 or greater. The Pearson Correlation Coefficients show that Domain 2, Family Involvement has a low correlation with each of the other domains while each of the other domains are more closely related. This could be because Domain 2, Family Involvement is the only domain that is not directly controlled by the school itself. Each of the other domains, School Governance, Organization, Policy, and Climate, Curriculum, Organization of Learning, and Special Education Referral Procedures and Policies are school actions which would be influenced in the same way by the values and beliefs of school leadership. The influence of school leaders could cause the domains that they control to be highly correlated.

Conclusions

Research Question 1 – Disproportionate representation of minority students in special education has been discussed as problematic at the national level for forty years (Artiles & Bal, 2008). According to Artiles and Bal (2008), minority students are placed in special education in disproportionate numbers because the achievement level of the minority students is significantly lower than that of White students. In South Dakota, a mathematically calculated Weighted Odds Ratio is used to determine disproportionality or overrepresentation of a particular group of students in special education (SD Department of Education, 2008). For example, in a school with a calculated Weighted Odds Ratio of 2.0, a Native American student would be two times more likely to be identified for special education services than a White student.

In this research study, 23 of the respondents completed the demographic section of the survey. From this demographic data, Weighted Odds Ratios were calculated to show the risk index for Native American students receiving special education services compared to the risk index for White students receiving special education services. In South Dakota, school districts were flagged for disproportionality concerns at a Weighted Odds Ratio of 2.0 or greater. Over half of the respondent districts for which a Weighted Odds Ratio was calculated indicated that in those districts, Native Americans were twice as likely as White students to be identified for special education services.

The demographic data indicates that it is likely that Native American students in South Dakota are being over identified for special education services. While the mode of 1.1 shows the most frequent calculated Weighted Odds Ratio is acceptable, the mean Weighted Odds Ratio, 2.99 indicates that Native American students are nearly three times

more likely to be identified for special education services than their White counterparts. In two of the schools, Native American students were more than ten times more likely to be identified for special education services. When these two schools, considered as outliers, were taken out and the mean of the Weighted Odds Ratios was recalculated, the result was 2.03 which is still above the acceptable level of 2.0. This means that Native American students are more than two times more likely to be identified for special education services in the participating schools.

Research Question 2 – part 1: How well do culturally responsive behaviors in the area of School governance, organization, policy and climate predict the academic success of Native American students?

The survey results indicated a negative correlation between the math achievement of Native American students and culturally responsive behaviors in the area of School Governance, Organization, Policy, and Climate while the correlation between the reading achievement and attendance of Native American students and culturally responsive behaviors in the area of School Governance, Organization, Policy, and Climate showed no significant relationship A negative correlation between the math achievement of Native American students and culturally responsive behaviors in the area of School Governance, Organization, Policy, and Climate would indicate that the more positive the scores for culturally responsive behaviors in this domain, the worse the students scored in math. A negative correlation such as this could mean that school leaders in these schools are working hard to create policies and climates that embrace the culture of Native American students, but as reported by Harry and Klingner (2006), have difficulty recruiting and retaining good teachers that can improve the achievement in math. As

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mentioned earlier, schools that serve large percentages of minority or low income students have more difficulty recruiting and retaining quality teachers as often, teachers come to these schools to get some experience and then leave for more attractive positions at the schools deemed more desirable. The quality of the teacher can significantly impact student achievement (Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006). If Native American students have limited access to high quality teachers, it would significantly impact student achievement in math.

Perhaps the negative correlation in math achievement means that school leaders have not considered the curriculum planning and scheduling needs that can lead to improved student achievement. As noted earlier, schools that have schedules requiring movement from program to program frequently lack the opportunity for teachers to have quality time with their students and show the least growth in student achievement (Harry & Klingner, 2006). If math instruction was given an uninterrupted block of the schedule like many schools have scheduled reading instruction, there would likely be a different outcome for math achievement for all students, including Native American students.

It could be that the high expectations for math achievement of Native American students are lacking in teachers. Kozol (2005) asserts that an inferior quality of education that would not be tolerated for other children is often accepted and even encouraged by school policies for minority students. Instruction may be limited to concrete processes and memorization instead of focused on problem solving and thinking which is how the students are tested.

Although the relationship between the reading achievement and school attendance of Native American students and culturally responsive behaviors in the area of School

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Governance, Organization, Policy, and Climate showed no significant relationship, the concern for recruiting and retaining quality teachers to serve schools serving Native American students, ensuring that sufficient time is provided in the schedule for quality instruction, and maintaining high expectations for all students is still pertinent. More research is needed to identify the quality of teaching provided in our schools serving Native American students and to identify ways to recruit and retain quality teachers in the schools deemed less desirable. Further, more research is needed to identify scheduling practices and instructional practices and expectations in our schools serving Native American students.

Research Question 2 – part 2: How well do culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Family Involvement predict the academic success of Native American students?

The survey results once again indicated a negative correlation between the math achievement of Native American students and culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Family Involvement while the correlation between the reading achievement and attendance of Native American students and culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Family Involvement showed no significant relationship. This could mean that the participating schools are providing communications between families and schools, creating welcoming environments for parents, soliciting parent input, providing culturally competent staff, and doing many of the other items the CRES survey equates with culturally responsive behaviors in family involvement; yet, there is not a positive impact on student achievement. It could also mean that school personnel are unaware of the barriers of family involvement for Native American families such as communication styles and unwelcoming school environments.

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As indicated in the study by Davis-Kean and Sexton (2009), family processes found to predict student achievement success varied across racial groups. For example, higher parental expectations are predictive of higher student achievement for European Americans, African Americans, and Asian Americans, but not for Hispanic Americans (Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009). Similarly, reading in kindergarten is an important predictor of third grade achievement for European Americans, Hispanic Americans, and Asian Americans, but not for African Americans (Davis-Kean & Sexton, 2009). Perhaps schools have projects to involve parents that overlook the communications styles and meeting environments identified as barriers by Mackety and Linder-VanBerschot (2008) that may intimidate Native American families and keep them from participating in an effective way. More research is needed to identify how to address the barriers of parental involvement that may limit family involvement by Native American parents and consequently impact student achievement.

Research Question 2 – part 3: How well do culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Curriculum predict the academic success of Native American students?

The survey results showed no significant relationship between culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Curriculum and the math and reading achievement and attendance of Native American students. In other words, the schools that are perceived to have a culturally responsive curriculum are no better at improving the math and reading achievement and attendance of the Native American students served there than are schools that lack this curriculum. On the one hand, this could mean that teacher knowledge of Native American historical contributions and perspectives vary widely. Likewise, teachers' understanding and ability to teach to individual learning styles will

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vary. Consequently, any impact a culturally relevant curriculum may have on student achievement in reading and math or on school attendance may be masked. On the other hand, it could mean that culturally relevant curricula do not impact specifically math and reading achievement and student attendance rates for Native American students.

Unlike schools in Montana, South Dakota does not have the state mandate to teach all students about the history, government systems, fine arts, oral traditions, and contemporary issues of the state's local Native American tribes (Juneau, 2006). Research that showed a culturally compatible curriculum increased student achievement when the curriculum was specific to the local tribe where it was implemented (Tharp et al., 2001). In public schools where there are multiple student ethnic groups, such a specific curriculum may not be feasible. More research is needed to analyze the impact of state mandated instruction of local tribal systems on the reading and math achievement of Native American students in public schools. Further, it would be beneficial to study the curriculum and instruction practices of the schools where Native American students are showing success in academic achievement to see if those practices could be generalized for Native American students from all tribes.

Research Question 2 – part 4: How well do culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Organization of Learning predict the academic success of Native American students?

The survey results showed no significant relationship between culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Organization of Learning and the math and reading achievement and attendance of Native American students. This domain includes teaching, learning, assessment, and behavior management, basically the things that occur

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on a daily basis in every classroom. This domain is where the quality of the teacher makes a significant difference. So once again, although schools may be working to embrace the ideals of cultural responsiveness, schools serving large numbers of Native American students may find it difficult to recruit and retain quality teachers who could have a significant impact on student achievement.

As mentioned in Chapter II, Native American students may come with limited background and experiential knowledge making participation in the public school curriculum difficult without first building the background that will help them to be successful (Demmert, 2005). The need for quality teachers at all levels are needed to help close the gap (Gordon, Kane, & Staiger, 2006). More research is needed to identify the quality of teaching provided in our schools serving Native American students and to identify ways to recruit and retain quality teachers in schools.

Research Question 2 – part 5: How well do culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Special education referral processes and programs predict the academic success of Native American students?

The survey results showed no significant relationship between culturally responsive behaviors in the area of Special Education referral processes and programs and the math and reading achievement and attendance of Native American students. While the results of the survey indicated there was no significant relationship between the participating schools' perceptions of culturally relevant practices in special education pre-referral and referral processes and programs and Native American student achievement in math and reading and school attendance, a more important consideration for this domain may be the demographic data results which suggested that Native American students in

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South Dakota are being over-identified for special education services. The mean Weighted Odds Ratio of the 23 reporting schools was 2.99 meaning that Native American students are nearly three times more likely to be identified for special education services than their White counterparts. Two of the reporting schools had calculated Weighted Odds Ratios over ten meaning that, in those schools, Native American students were more than ten times more likely to be identified for special education services than their White counterparts. When excluding the two outliers, the mean Weighted Odds Ration was still calculated at 2.03.

Based on this research, culturally responsive practices in special education referral processes and programs have no impact on the achievement in math and reading of Native American students. The over-identification of Native American students for special education services could be due to lack of opportunity to learn as suggested by Harry and Klingner (2006), however that lack of opportunity to learn could be for a myriad of reasons. As stated in Chapter II, rural Native American children are least likely of all ethnic subgroups to be proficient in letter recognition when they start to school (Miller, 2005). Further, Miller (2005) states that the average Native American child starts to school with a vocabulary of about three thousand words compared to about fifteen thousand word vocabularies for the average White child. School learning opportunities are starting on an uneven playing field.

Opportunity to learn can be insufficient due to poor school attendance, but opportunity to learn can also be insufficient due to limited experiential learning related to poverty issues, due to exclusion from classroom instruction for behavioral issues because of in-school and out-of-school suspension policies, and due to inadequate instructional

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curriculum and teaching techniques. More research should be done to identify the impact of each of these constructs and the extent to which they impact student achievement.

An overall conclusion that could be drawn from the results of this study is that culturally responsive behaviors alone do not impact achievement for Native American students. Perhaps culturally responsive behaviors improve relationships between school personnel and students and help to make the school environment more conducive to keeping students in school. Perhaps the perception of cultural responsiveness draws students to a school in a district where there is school choice. But, something more than culturally responsive behaviors is required to raise the reading and math achievement level and school attendance of Native American students.

Another consideration of the results of this study must be that the survey instrument was intended to be a self-assessment study completed by a team of people including parents and community members. If the tool had been used in that way with the perceptions of a variety of stakeholders included, the results might have been quite different. This researcher questions the possible bias of perception if the responders to the survey fit the profile of a majority of educators across the state of South Dakota, white and middle-class people.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this researcher are that more research is needed first and foremost to discover what factors impact the math and reading achievement of Native American students in South Dakota and elsewhere. Do we need to recruit and retain more quality teachers in our schools serving Native American students? Is the priority for instruction reflected in scheduling practices so that every child gets quality instruction

time in math and reading every day? Are the expectations for math and reading achievement of Native American students the same as the expectations for achievement for White students? Finding answers to these questions will help us make progress in closing the achievement gap between Native American and White students.

Educators from public schools serving Native American students should continue to analyze Native American student achievement data, school attendance data, and school discipline data in order to measure student progress and student needs. School administrators from these districts must work to hire and retain quality teachers, monitor scheduling practices to provide the best quality instruction, ensure high-expectations for all student learning, provide teachers with professional development opportunities that will increase their understanding of regional Native American systems and perspectives, address barriers that limit family involvement for Native Americans in order to encourage more participation in school policy decision making and to influence parental educational aspirations for their children.

If this study was redone, this researcher would be interested to see the whether the results would be different if the self-assessment survey was used as it was meant to be used with a representative group of stakeholders including members of the Native American community. That might bring to light perspectives and feelings about prejudice that are presently not spoken because it is socially unappropriate. It might reveal ways to address the barriers that are limiting family involvement with Native American students and allow us to take full advantage of the influence of family in a child's education.

The results of this research study will cause this researcher to look more closely at all the aspects of education that have impact on school success for our Native American

students. I will start looking for ways to recruit and retain quality teachers and for ways to help improve the instructional practices of our current teachers. I will address the barriers that might keep Native American parents from participating in the educational processes of their child. I will consider curriculum priorities and scheduling practices that will allow our students to have the best learning experiences possible. I will work to see that all teachers have high expectations for all students. I will create opportunities of shared governance providing a voice for Native American students in the decisions made regarding education in our schools.

It could be that the benefits of culturally relevant educational systems are not measured in standardized achievement tests and group attendance rates. It could be that the benefits are found in the building of understanding and respect and reduction of prejudice and bias between ethnic/racial groups both in schools and in the larger communities. If that is the case, then culturally relevant educational systems are a way for us to win half the battle. In the words of Martin Luther King, Jr., "Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education" (King, n.d., para.1).

FW: permission for use
Elaine Mulligan [Elaine.Mulligan@asu.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, January 09, 2008 9:09 AM

To: Greseth, Michelle

Michelle,

We would be happy to have you use our assessment as part of your
research. Please note that NCCRESt is now housed at Arizona State
University. If you have any further needs or questions, do not hesitate
to contact us at nccrest@asu.edu.

Elaine

Elaine Mulligan
Program Coordinator
NIUSI/NCCRESt/LeadScape
Arizona State University
(480) 965-8378
-----Original Message-----
From: NCCREST [mailto:NCCREST@cudenver.edu]
Sent: Tuesday, January 08, 2008 8:56 AM
To: nccrest@asu.edu
Subject: FW: permission for use

This is a forward of an email.

-----Original Message-----
From: Michelle.Greseth@k12.sd.us [mailto:Michelle.Greseth@k12.sd.us]
Sent: Friday, January 04, 2008 2:15 PM
To: NCCREST
Subject: permission for use
Please inform me who I should contact to get permission to use Equity in
Special Education Placement: A School Self-Assessment guide for
Culturally Responsive Practice as a part of my doctoral research.
Thank you,
Michelle Greseth, Special Education Director

ASSESSING SCHOOL DOMAINS RELEVANT TO CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATION

This survey asks for your judgment in measuring how your school responds to the 5 domains relevant to addressing the needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. **Please circle one choice for each item that best describes the activities and behaviors that occur in your school.**

3=Almost always   2=Frequently   1=Sometimes   0=Almost never   n/a=Not applicable

Think about each listed activity and select the rating that best represents its occurrence at your school.

- *Almost always* = occurs more than 75% of the time
- *Frequently* = occurs 50 to 75% of the time
- *Sometimes* = occurs 26 to 50% of the time
- *Almost Never* = occurs 25% or less of the time
- *Not Applicable* = does not apply to your school

Part I: School Governance and Organizations

1. Administration, faculty and support personnel are well informed of the influence of culture, language, and ethnicity on school achievement.

    3 2 1 0 n/a

2. The administration works collaboratively with all the members of the school community to ensure equitable treatment for all students.

    3 2 1 0 n/a

3. The administration provides opportunities for and support personnel on issues of cultural, language, and ethnic diversity.

    3 2 1 0 n/a

4. The administration ensures that the special education process is conducted fairly and appropriately.

    3 2 1 0 n/a

5. The administration employs faculty and support personnel who demonstrate the ability to meaningfully and respectfully interact with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

    3 2 1 0 n/a

6. The administration creates a school culture in which students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds feel they are listened to, their opinions valued, and they are involved in decision-making.

3   2   1   0   n/a

7. The administration instills an ethic of care, respect, and responsibility.

3   2   1   0   n/a

8. The administration exemplifies a positive attitude towards the school, teachers, students, and families.

3   2   1   0   n/a

9. The administration provides support and encouragement for participation in extra-curricular activities by students from diverse cultural, language, ethnic, and ability groups.

3   2   1   0   n/a

Part II. School Policies and Reforms

10. Administration, faculty and support personnel remain informed about current school policies and reforms that impact the delivery of services to students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

3   2   1   0   n/a

11. The school ensures that all policies and reforms are explained to parents in their language through written communication and various meetings held at times convenient to parents (with childcare, and translators provided, and parents involved in the planning).

3   2   1   0   n/a

12. The school involves families and the community in the formation of new school policies.

3   2   1   0   n/a

13. New reforms are implemented with sensitivity toward the diverse learning needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

3   2   1   0   n/a

Part III: School Climate

14. The school accepts the responsibility   3   2   1   0   n/a
for the achievement of all students.

15. The school obtains membership in
organizations that promote equitable   3   2   1   0   n/a
education and provide instructional
strategies for all students.

16. The school obtains materials from
professional organizations and makes   3   2   1   0   n/a
them available to faculty and support
personnel.

17. The school sponsors professionally
conducted workshops where faculty and
support personnel can identify their   3   2   1   0   n/a
cultural and/or linguistic biases and work
to address them.

18. The school informs staff members that
disrespectful responses to any child or
family member regardless of cultural   3   2   1   0   n/a
background, ethnicity, and/or
socioeconomic status will not be tolerated
on the school campus, including teachers'
lounge, office or other area.

19. The school establishes a district-wide
professional development training in
cultural competence (i.e., the ability to   3   2   1   0   n/a
interact meaningfully and respectfully
with individuals from culturally and
linguistically diverse backgrounds.)

20. The school remains knowledgeable
about their students' culture and   3   2   1   0   n/a
community by visiting students in their
home environment.

21. The school provides professional
development to employees to provide   3   2   1   0   n
them with necessary skills to objectively
and respectfully visit students' homes and
communities.

22. The school collaborates with the community, universities and other relevant institutions to assist in developing standards for addressing the needs of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and their families.

3   2   1   0   n/a

23. The school lobbies the state licensing agency to include course requirements (e.g., diversity education, adaptive instructional methods) that will improve the educational outcome of all students, including those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

3   2   1   0   n/a

Part IV. Family Involvement

24. The school has developed an effective ongoing communication system with families.

3   2   1   0   n/a

25. The school provides professional development to staff and teachers on effective communication with parents from diverse cultural, language, and ethnic groups.

3   2   1   0   n/a

26. The school is a welcoming environment for families from diverse backgrounds, for example, with front office personnel who speak the same language as parents, and security and other personnel who are friendly and welcoming, greeting parents with a smile.

3   2   1   0   n/a

27. The school surveys families from diverse backgrounds to gather suggestions on ways to involve parents in their children's education.

3   2   1   0   n/a

28. The school provides adequate information to parents about pre-referral intervention in the language of the home.

3   2   1   0   n/a

29. The school recruits and maintains a resource list of culturally competent staff and community contacts who can communicate effectively with parents from diverse cultural, ethnic, and language groups.

3   2   1   0   n/a

30. The school assists families in accessing medical and community resources as well as other support services by directing the families to the appropriate agency(ies).   3   2   1   0   n/a

31. The school involves families in the pre-referral intervention process as respected partners and ensures they are well-informed at all times.   3   2   1   0   n/a

32. The school assists families in understanding their rights and available services under IDEA by providing one-on-one counseling, as well as workshops and/or referrals to advocates.   3   2   1   0   n/a

33. The school has an established plan for following up on parent conferences regarding request for services or other parental concerns.   3   2   1   0   n/a

34. The school utilizes parent liaisons to help parents and students navigate the school system.   3   2   1   0   n/a

35. The school involves parents in the governance of the school.   3   2   1   0   n/a

36. The school provides childcare, transportation, or alternate meeting days and times if needed.   3   2   1   0   n/a

Part V: Curriculum

37. The curriculum reflects an integration
of ethnic and cultural content throughout   3   2   1   0   n/a
programming, rather than assigning the
study of diverse cultural groups to a single
unit or one month.

38. The curriculum provides opportunities
for students to investigate and understand   3   2   1   0   n/a
how cultural assumptions and biases
influence subject areas.

39. The curriculum fosters respect and
understanding for diverse cultures by
providing materials that help students   3   2   1   0   n/a
develop positive attitudes toward different
racial, ethnic, cultural, language, and
ability groups.

40. The curriculum supports and valu.
the experiences and information stud...   3   2   1   0   n/a
have learned within their cultural gr u,

41. The curriculum helps students make
connections between what they are   3   2   1   0   n/a
learning in school and their personal
experiences.

42. The curriculum situates specific
cultural and local knowledge in a global   3   2   1   0   n/a
context.

43. The curriculum is made interesting
and challenging for all students (not   3   2   1   0   n/a
focused on rote learning activities).

44. The curriculum explicitly teaches
cultural capital (the norms, behaviors, and   3   2   1   0   n/a
attitudes) that provides access to
achievement.

45. The curriculum uses the local
language and cultural knowledge (funds of   3   2   1   0   n/a
knowledge) as a foundation for the rest of
the curriculum.

Part VI: Teaching and Learning

46. Teachers understand the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture, language and social class interact to influence student behavior.

3   2   1   0   n/a

47. Teachers are knowledgeable about the history and cultures of diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural groups.

3   2   1   0   n/a

48. Teachers are knowledgeable about individual learning styles.

3   2   1   0   n/a

49. Teachers are knowledgeable about the second language acquisition process and how to support students who are English language learners.

3   2   1   0   n/a

50. Teachers modify their instruction so that students from diverse ethnic, racial, cultural, language, and ability groups will have an equal opportunity to learn.

3   2   1   0   n/a

51. Teachers keep accurate records of each student's progress.

3   2   1   0   n/a

52. Teachers relate content and instructional strategies to the cultural background of their students.

3   2   1   0   n/a

53. Teachers utilize instructional materials that reflect images and perspectives from diverse groups

3   2   1   0   n/a

54. Teachers help students to appreciate current and historical events from multiple perspectives.

3   2   1   0   n/a

55. Teachers help to organize activities and projects that enable students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups work together.

3   2   1   0   n/a

56. Teachers inform students about stereotyping and other related biases that have negative effects on racial and ethnic relations.

3   2   1   0   n/a

57. Teachers have high expectations for all students regardless of their background or differences.

3   2   1   0   n/a

58. Teachers work from the premise that "all children can learn" and continue to attempt different instructional approaches until each child is reached.

3   2   1   0   n/a

59. Teachers feel a strong sense of responsibility for all students, including students referred for or already placed in special education.

3   2   1   0   n/a

60. Teachers are experts in instruction and management and know how to effectively challenge and support their students.

3   2   1   0   n/a

61. Teachers are knowledgeable about and skilled in using strategies for teaching English language learners.

3   2   1   0   n/a

62. Classroom assessment is conducted with fairness and sensitivity towards students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

3   2   1   0   n/a

63. Teachers use a range of assessm   strategies that provide students from diverse backgrot nds opportunities to demonstrate their mastery and skills, including the opportunity to share what they know in their native language if they wish.

3   2   1   0   n/a

64. Administrators and teachers use a variety of instruments and strategies to assist students from diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups in meeting State standards and other mandated requirements (e.g. No Child Left Behind Act).

3   2   1   0   n/a

65. Teachers utilize information from several sources, including families, in assessing students' achieveme:.'.

3   2   1   0   n/a

66. The school identifies and uses multiple assessment tools and strategies that are research-based and culturally valid.

3   2   1   0   n/a

67. The school provides school and district-wide training in the administration of assessment tools and methods that consider the student's cultural background.

3   2   1   0   n/a

68. The school knows when and how to provide accommodations to students with special needs and English language learners.

3   2   1   0   n/a

69. The school ensures that high stakes tests have been validated for the purpose for which they are used and have been standardized on populations of students similar to their students.

3   2   1   0   n/a

Part VIII: Behavior Management

70. Administration, teachers, and support personnel are knowledgeable about differences in cultural practices that might impact on student behavior.

3   2   1   0   n/a

71. Administration, teachers, and support personnel discipline students with a sensitivity toward students' cultural and linguistic differences.

3   2   1   0   n/a

72. Classroom rules and procedures are written and explained in language that is clear to students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

3   2   1   0   n/a

73. Teachers are knowledgeable about certain behaviors that are consistent with students' cultural background so as not to consider them deviant.

3   2   1   0   n/a

74. Teachers utilize resource persons belonging to or familiar with a students' cultural and linguistic background to assist in planning behavioral interventions.

3   2   1   0   n/a

75. Students are taught school-sanctioned behaviors, particularly as they might conflict with culturally specific behaviors.

3   2   1   0   n/a

76. Students are made aware of behaviors that might be culturally specific so they can learn how to interact appropriately with students from cultures other than their own.

3   2   1   0   n/a

Part IX: Special Education Pre-referral
and Referral Processes

77. The Child Study Team uses a flow
chart to help with decision-making during
the referral process.

3   2   1   0   n/a

78. The flowchart ensures that students
have been provided with meaningful,
appropriate pre-referral strategies,
adequate opportunities to learn, and
validation of their difficulties across time
and settings.

3   2   1   0   n/a

79. Participants in Child Study Teams are
knowledgeable about and able to facilitate
a range of meaningful pre-referral
strategies.

3   2   1   0   n/a

80. Sufficient time is devoted at team
meetings to selecting the best strategies
for individual students based on data
collected by teachers and others prior to
the meeting.

3   2   1   0   n/a

81. Pre-referral strategies are varied and
substantive, such as transferring a student
to another teacher's class or providing
individual tutoring through and after-
school program.

3   2   1   0   n/a

82. Classes are taught by certified teachers
who speak the child's first language.

3   2   1   0   n/a

83. Classroom room size is controlled to
ensure an optimal learning environment
that addresses the needs of all the students.

3   2   1   0   n/a

84. Specific instructional objectives are
developed for each child, and teams
specifically identify who is responsible for
addressing these objectives and the
timeframe in which they are to be
monitored.

3   2   1   0   n/a

85. The classroom context (e.g., teaching
style, classroom arrangement and
management, and peer relationships) from
which a child is referred is carefully
observed.

3   2   1   0   n/a

86. School personnel are knowledgeable about cultural and linguistic diversity, including differentiating between second language acquisition and disabilities in the case of English language learners, should be present at the Child Study Team meeting.

3   2   1   0   n/a

87. Parents/Caregivers should be involved as respected, valued partners at every stage of the process

3   2   1   0   n/a

Part X: Demographics

Student Demographics	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Native American	Other	Total
The number of students from each ethnic or racial background in my school.							
Of the total number of students in my school, the number receiving special education services.							

Table 7. Average Math Scale Scores of White and Native American Students.

4th Grade Mathematics	1990	1992	1996	2000	2003	2005	2007
White	220	227	232	234	243	246	248
Native American	*	*	217	208	223	226	228
8th Grade Mathematics							
White	270	277	281	284	288	289	291
Native American	*	*	*	259	263	264	264

(U.S. Department of Education, 2008)
*Reporting standards not met

Table 8. Average Reading Scale Scores of Native American and White Students.

4th Grade Reading	1992	1994	1998	2000	2002	2003	2005	2007
White	224	224	225	224	229	229	229	231
Native American	*	211	*	214	207	202	204	203
8th Grade Reading								
White	267	267	270	**	272	272	271	272
Native American	*	248	*	**	250	246	249	247

(U. S. Department of Education, 2008)
*Reporting standards not met
** Not available

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