

# Moving Toward A "JUST AND VITAL CULTURE" Multiculturalism in Our Schools

Bonnie Benard

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*Note: Moving Toward a Just and Vital Culture”: Multiculturalism in Our Schools*, published in 1990, by Bonnie Benard, was a first of its kind. Benard assembled the existing research to create a lay-friendly resource for understanding youth substance abuse in cultural context. She dispelled myths. Most ethnic populations use alcohol and drugs at a lesser rate than White. Acculturation into White society actually increased substance abuse. Benard presents a clear and compelling case for creating multicultural school environments. She calls for the *redistribution of power and authority within the school and classroom*.

This classic article is worth reviewing in the current day. Where does a school district stand? What do we believe? How do we see all youth in the system? Are they at promise? At their needs being met at the school *and* community level? A resilience perspective can undergird multicultural efforts. At the very core the goal will be creating a peaceful world.

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## Introduction

Welcome to the University of Minnesota, National Resilience Resource Center website. I am so grateful for technological advances in the last decade that allow us to easily and economically make significant historical resources broadly available. Here you will find five pivotal works by Bonnie Benard. These youth development publications have staying power and include:

- ***The Case for Peers*** (December 1990)
- ***Moving Toward a Just and Vital Culture: Multiculturalism in Our Schools*** (April 1991)
- ***Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in the Family, School and Community***, (August 1991)
- ***Mentoring Programs for Urban Youth: Handle with Care*** ( June 1992)
- ***Turning the Corner: From Risk to Resilience*** (updated 2004)

When Bonnie Benard and I first met we were professional colleagues associated with the U. S. Department of Education's Safe and Drug Free Schools regional training centers. Bonnie was affiliated with the Western Center in Portland, Oregon and San Francisco, California, and I was at the University of Minnesota representing the Midwest Regional based in Oakbrook, Illinois. One of my first memories was calling the Western Center and asking them to break their rules to send me copies of new publications by Bonnie Benard. They kept telling me they were not funded to send things out of their ten-state service area. I persisted and finally received the important documents. In time Bonnie and her colleagues came to Minnesota and conducted prevention trainings for my center. Eventually the National Resilience Resource Center was born.

Over the years Bonnie's early publications have stuck in my mind. They were seminal; they were laboriously created to synthesize important research for lay prevention practitioners who were trying to find successful ways of reducing and eliminating youth substance abuse. Most of these professionals were tired and overwhelmed. They perked up when they began to hear Bonnie's positive, hopeful message about resilience.

It was clearly a controversial and new message. We heard her talking about "youth at promise" rather than kids "at risk," about hope rather than resignation, about possibility rather than problems. She was part librarian and part social worker--a champion from the Midwest who lodged herself squarely in Berkeley and followed the research of the best and the brightest from a multitude of disciplines. Bonnie was a collector and conceptualizer who knew no boundaries. She searched, and read and wrote; then she spoke out. Bonnie was an advocate for youth. I remember her repeatedly saying how important it was to "speak truth to power."

Today I know speaking out like this meant covering a lot of ground and trying to see clearly what might really make a difference in kids' lives. Bonnie knew first hand what it meant to have siblings and partners impacted by addiction. She saw the impact of racism, poverty and limiting special education and other labels. She instinctively felt what it meant to use published research to discover new avenues, to point in unconventional directions.

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Sometimes it meant being the target of more established and degreed scientific experts' criticisms and agitation. More than anything I saw my friend and colleague squarely planting her feet on the sacred ground of ethical scholarship and social advocacy. Bonnie has never wavered from her position that we adults can and must do more for children, that there is a national agenda yet to be fully created and funded. Bonnie bridged the gap between the researchers and the prevention practitioners. In doing so she has lighted the dark corners and brought us a hopeful path.

These posted publications are stepping stones in that path. There are newer publications that round out this discussion and strengthen the case of the national agenda of youth development grounded in resilience research. (Visit [www.cce.umn.edu/nrrc](http://www.cce.umn.edu/nrrc) and view "Resilience Research.")

Today Bonnie and I know about grey hair and more than occasionally spend time thinking about retirement. We deeply value the work we have shared for more than a decade and will continue into the next. We know important documents need to be passed like a torch to new runners. We sense deep in our bones that systems change—the really big systems change from risk to resilience, from problems to possibilities—takes several generations and changes hearts as well as minds.

From Bonnie's early works we know caring and support, opportunities for meaningful participation and encouraging high expectations change kids' lives. We also know that for adults to become caring and inviting and encouraging requires that they tap their own natural resilience and live in a secure state of mind. The research agenda of the next decades must explore such new avenues. The initial work that was been done by Bonnie Benard will serve us well in defining the foundation on which the new agenda can wisely be built. Please feel free to print these documents and disseminate to systems change agents. For additional printed copies on a cost recovery basis contact [nrrc@cce.umn.edu](mailto:nrrc@cce.umn.edu).

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January 2004

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# **Moving Toward a "Just and Vital Culture": Multiculturalism in Our Schools**

**Bonnie Benard**

**Western Regional Center For Drug-Free  
Schools and Communities**

**Far West Laboratory**

**April 1991**

**I**n the last several years researchers, practitioners, and policy advocates in the alcohol and other drug prevention and education fields have been especially concerned with the growing number of children and youth, predominantly from ethnic minority backgrounds, who are considered at risk for the interrelated problems of educational failure and dropping out, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and delinquency. Research exploring the relationship between substance abuse and ethnicity was recently summarized by Greg Austin in four Western Center *Prevention Research Updates*, focused respectively on Native Americans, Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian Americans. While this research has many limitations (see Austin's discussions), several implications for "preventionists" working in schools and communities can be deduced. The following discussion will briefly address the key findings of this research and then discuss the implications and the role schools can play in addressing this critical problem.

### **Implications from Research on Substance Abuse and Ethnicity**

Perhaps the most striking finding is that most ethnic populations (other than Native Americans) use alcohol and drugs at a *lesser* rate than Whites. However, as ethnic groups become more acculturated and assimilated into the dominant American culture, research has shown that their use of substances *increases*. One possible explanation proposed for this phenomenon is that the values of cooperation, communality, sharing, group support, interdependence, and social responsibility that characterize most ethnic minority cultures may function as protective factors. These values mitigate against the development of the alienation experienced by youth. Such alienation is characterized by values of individualism, independence,

competition, self over others, and nonsharing, and which, in essence, serve as risk factors for the development of problems with alcohol and drugs (Nobles; Romero; Werner). As ethnic groups are acculturated in the dominant U.S. culture, they often take on the values of this culture--including the heavy drinking norms glamorized in the media. What research has also found, with profound implications for prevention, is that youths who are *biculturally competent*, that is, they can function successfully in both their culture of origin and in the dominant U.S. culture, have strikingly lower levels of substance use.

Another striking finding from research into substance use and ethnicity is that although most ethnic groups use fewer substances than Whites, they suffer *more* behavioral and health problems associated with use. Most researchers concur that this phenomenon reflects the cumulative effects of other risk factors experienced by ethnic groups, especially poverty, unemployment, discrimination, lack of access to health care, and despair. Furthermore, most researchers conclude that we really cannot address the prevention of problems such as substance abuse in ethnic communities without seriously coming to grips with poverty and lack of opportunities for housing, health care, education, employment, and child care (Schorr; Wilson).

Additional support for this conclusion comes from research focused on the causes of educational failure. Poverty has been identified as the greatest risk factor for educational failure and dropping out (Reeves, p. 15). Moreover, children and youth of ethnic minority background constitute a large percentage of the youth living in poverty. According to Pallas et al., "In 1984, the poverty rate for White children was 16.1 percent, whereas 38.7 percent of Hispanic children were living in poverty households, and 46.2 percent of Black

youngsters were living in poverty. Although Blacks and Hispanics made up one quarter of the 1- to 17-year-old population in 1984, they represented more than *one-half* of the children in poverty" (p. 17). The research of Martin Orland found for each year a child lives in poverty, the likelihood of falling behind his or her expected grade level increases by 2 percent (Reeves, p. 15). So, according to Orland, "A child whose family has been mired in poverty for 10 years is 20 times more likely to do badly in school than a child who is poor for only a year...[Furthermore], if that same child also attends a school with a very high concentration of poor students, his or her statistical chances of school failure increase strikingly" (Reeves, p. 15).

The poverty experienced by Native Americans and Blacks is the result of persistent and deep sociocultural and economic exploitation, otherwise referred to as *racism*, which has relegated these groups to a marginal, low-caste status in American society (Ogbu). To the extent that these groups, along with the increasing numbers of Hispanic and other ethnic minority immigrants, are educationally and economically disenfranchised and denied opportunities to become biculturally competent--that is, to have the opportunities to both celebrate their respective cultures and to participate successfully in the mainstream of society--is the extent to which the youth of these groups will continue to experience poverty, the lack of "hope for a bright future," and the alienation that often results in the development of the social problems of substance abuse, delinquency, and teen pregnancy (Nobles; Children's Defense Fund).

### **Toward Multiculturalism**

Research clearly demonstrates that if we are to truly address the issue of substance abuse in ethnic minority populations, we must face head-on the underlying dynamic of racism in our society. What is equally clear is that to



create a society that values and nourishes its cultural diversity, we must create environments for children from *infancy* on that are characterized by respect for difference and by high expectations of success for *all* children. (Phenice and Hildebrand; Rooney-Rebeck and Jason). While public policies targeting discrimination and segregation are essential at all governmental levels--local, state, and national--if we are committed to fighting racism, we cannot wait for policies from "above" to propel us. Rather, as in any successful change effort, we must "think globally" but "act locally," starting "where we are with what we got." This means taking action right in our own schools and communities.

While the school is often unfairly scapegoated and certainly forced to bear the burdens of social problems created by our political and economic systems, as well as the responsibility for their amelioration, the school, as the major institution for socialization in our society, is a critical arena in which inequality is perpetuated (McCarthy, p. 273). According to Goodenough, "Schools are the instruments by which people control access to more specialized microcultures and to the power and privilege they confer" (p.6). Historically, schools have played a significant role in denying minorities *access to the skills and knowledge* they need to be successful in American society. As Jose Cardenas of the Intercultural Development and Research Association ironically concludes, "If the purpose of the American public school were to *perpetuate* class differences, then public schools have not been the failure we have been led to believe" (in Reeves, p. 21).

**Key Findings from *Prevention Research Update Number Two: Substance Abuse Among Minority Youth: Native Americans***

- The rates of use for almost all drugs, but especially alcohol, marijuana, and inhalants, have been consistently higher among American Indian youth than non-Indian youth.
- The rate of alcoholism is two to three times the national average.
- Heavy drinking has been called the main reason that one in two Indian students never finish high school.
- Native American adolescents are profoundly alienated and depressed and experience high rates of delinquency, learning and behavior problems, and suicide.
- This situation is the result of persistent and deep sociocultural and economic exploitation which has made them the most severely disadvantaged population in the U.S.
- The main risk factors for Native American adolescent substance abuse are (1) a sense of cultural dislocation and lack of integration into either traditional Indian or modern American life; (2) community norms supporting use; (3) peer-group support for use; (4) lack of hope for a bright future.
- Prevention efforts must focus on (1) community involvement in community development efforts with youth playing a major role; (2) educational interventions that allow Native American youth to develop bicultural competence, i.e., to develop the skills necessary to be successful in the dominant culture while retaining their identification with and respect for traditional Native American values.

It should come as no surprise, then, that many ethnic minority members view the current failure of our schools to successfully educate minority youth as another means for perpetuating minorities' inequality and thus maintaining their subordinate position in society. It should also come as no surprise that minorities find schools "among the most critical and accessible targets through which to influence the 'public culture' of the wider society. Schools afford a foothold for instituting pervasive changes elsewhere in the society" (Lewis, p. 33). According to the Quality Education for Minorities Project, "The one force that has sustained and empowered *all* [minority] people has been the power of education...The door to the future for every child is first and foremost the door to the schoolhouse" (p.16).

That these "pervasive changes"--that is, the replacing of racist policies grounded in fear of cultural differences with policies and programs emanating

from an appreciation for and a celebration of our many rich cultural heritages--are necessary for the survival of our nation has been acknowledged by an ever-widening number of educational researchers, policymakers, foundations, and others over the last few years. While concerns over the failure of our schools to educate minority children and concerns over the increasing cultural diversity in our society are not new--in fact, many of the articles being written and discussions being held now are parallel to those of 20 and 30 years ago!--a sense of urgency, based on undeniable demographic changes, characterizes the recent discussion.

As our nation enters the 1990s we are faced with unprecedented levels of immigration (now our major source of population growth). By the year 2000, nearly one in three Americans will be considered "minority" (Hodgkinson). To complicate the situation even further, broad labels like Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, are misleading, for within these broad categories are yet even more diverse cultures. According to Airhihenbuwa, "The U.S. population includes 26.5 million African Americans, each with a strong heritage to one of the 58 countries on the African continent; 14.6 million Hispanics, with three major places of origin; 3.5 million Asian/Pacific Islanders, with 23 different countries of origin; and 1.4 million Native Americans from more than 500 federally recognized American Indian tribes" (p. 240). Schensul characterizes the challenge ahead as follows: "The decade of the nineties will see greater ethnic and cultural diversity in the United States than in any other period in American history. The consequences of this diversity are already being felt in every sector of society including the workplace, the arts, the health-care system, and the schools. Educators are increasingly called upon to solve problems stemming from different and sometimes conflicting interests of

### **Key Findings from *Prevention Research Update Number Four: Substance Abuse Among Black Youth***

- Substance use is lower among Black adolescents than among Whites or any other ethnic group except Asian Americans.
- While Blacks are more likely to be abstainers and to have lower levels of alcohol use than Whites, they experience more drinking-related *problems*, especially binge drinking, health problems, symptoms of physical dependence, and symptoms of loss of control.
- Compared with Whites, adult Blacks are more likely to be victims of alcohol-related homicide, to be arrested for drunkenness, and to be sent to prison rather than to treatment for alcohol-related crimes.
- At even moderate levels of use, the adverse consequences of substance use are exacerbated by the conditions of poverty, unemployment, discrimination, poor health, and despair that many Black youth face.
- Drug trafficking adversely affects the ability of the entire Black community to function and deal with its other problems.
- Black communities are particularly exploited by the alcohol industry through excessive advertising and number of sales outlets in these neighborhoods.
- Prevention efforts must (1) involve the community in community development efforts that include an active role for youth; (2) facilitate the development of racial consciousness and pride; (3) include public awareness campaigns that counter the alcohol/tobacco industry's advertising; (4) be broad-based, i.e., providing access to a range of social and economic services and opportunities; (5) restructure schools to provide opportunities for academic success.

ethnically, culturally, and socially distinct populations. *Finding creative solutions to problems of access, cultural and economic inequities, culturally and socially relevant curriculum content and linguistic difference is the challenge of the 1990s and beyond*" (Schensul and Carroll, p. 339). It is to this challenge that we'll address the remainder of our discussion.

### **What Schools Can Do**

Essential to living and working in increasingly culturally diverse schools, workplaces, and communities, is a perspective that cultural diversity is not a problem or crisis but rather an incredibly exciting opportunity enabling every American to experience other peoples and cultures. In fact, when discussing

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the issue of multiculturalism or multicultural education, we must remember we're not only concerned with creating opportunities for ethnic minority youth. Rather, even though inextricably intertwined with this concern, we're concerned with empowering all youth through cross-cultural interaction, with changing the hearts and minds of the dominant culture, beginning with preschool children, to not only respect difference and appreciate other cultures but to learn cross-cultural literacy and competency as well. St. Lawrence sums up the dual purpose of multiculturalism efforts as follows: "In one sense, multicultural education is an argument for an 'indigenization' of the schools so that educational programs might more truly represent the cultural and political interests of the particular children and communities involved. In another sense, it is an argument for the importance of *all* children receiving the advantages of cross-cultural experience that gives them meaningful skills as well as values, facilitating their participation in cross-cultural collaboration " (p. 22). Furthermore, as Margaret Mead long ago recommended, "The ultimate goal of schooling might be conceived for all children as the development of abilities for '*world-mobility*' " (St. Lawrence, p. 22). Certainly, "The 'Ugly American' tourist, diplomat, and entrepreneur are no longer competitive in an international marketplace where others are more sensitive to diversity and multilingual business people skillfully interact" (Arvizu and Saravia-Shore, p. 366).

The current popular metaphor to describe this perspective of multiculturalism is that of the "salad bowl" or "fruit salad" in which each vegetable or fruit retains its integrity and yet contributes to creating the whole. This perspective will allow us to develop a truly culturally transformed society that celebrates its

**Key Research Findings from *Prevention Research Update Number Three: Substance Abuse Among Latino Youth***

- Hispanics are one of the largest, youngest, and fastest-growing of the nation's subgroups (half of the Hispanic population is now under age 18).
- While Hispanics in general have no higher levels of use prevalence than Whites or other ethnic groups, some research has found that Hispanics have more drug-related problems and that drug abuse is a serious, chronic, and multigenerational problem in many Hispanic families and communities.
- Hispanic youth who do drink consume heavier quantities and experience more drinking problems than do other adolescents.
- Heavier use patterns beginning in late adolescence appear to result from a blending of the drinking patterns of the donor cultures with those common among U.S. youth and reflect the value that the right to drink is a rite-of-passage.
- Differential acculturation can produce stress in family relationships and behavioral problems in immigrant children who may acculturate to the U.S. culture at a faster rate than their parents.
- Prevention efforts must (1) encourage biculturalism and bilingualism, building on cultural strengths and pride while facilitating the development of skills necessary to succeed in U.S. society; (2) involve the community in community development efforts, especially the development of cultural arts centers; (4) involve the community in public awareness campaigns to counter the efforts of the alcohol/tobacco industry in Hispanic communities.

diversity. To fail to adopt this perspective is to buy into a "deficit" model for educating children and "to return to a national policy of assimilation to the dominant Western European cultural tradition [the [the metaphor of America as "melting pot"], the result of which may well be increased marginalization of ethnic and minority groups throughout much of the country" (Schensul and Carroll, p. 340) . The net effect of this approach, advocated, for example, by Allan Bloom in *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) and E.D. Hirsch in *Cultural Literacy* (1987), is that America will increasingly become a third-world nation characterized by a growing disparity and conflict between the haves and have-nots.

*An attitude that celebrates diversity* is, therefore, the foundation upon which a school can be culturally transformed and the principle around which all

school change efforts are organized. So, just how do we proceed in this endeavor? From a review of the extensive literature on "multicultural education" (not to be used synonymously with "multicultural curriculum") five components appear to be essential to creating a culturally transformed school-community.

#### Components for Creating Multicultural School Environment

- Active involvement of the school community
- School Policy
- Redistribution of power and authority within school and classrooms
- High expectations by teachers
- Curriculum issues: infusion, language study, individual learning style and personnel

#### Active Involvement

First, as in any change effort, the *active involvement* of the school community is necessary. Taking a lesson from higher education where cultural diversity has been given more attention, "Cultural diversity programs have been successful on campuses where faculty have been actively involved in changing the campus environment" (Moses, p. 407). As in the development of a comprehensive alcohol and drug prevention effort, this means the establishment of a *multicultural task force* that consists of youth, teachers, the principal, other school personnel, parents, and community representatives. *It is imperative that this group include representatives from the ethnic groups in the school.* According to Delpit, "The appropriate education for poor children and children of color can only be devised in consultation with adults who share their culture. Black parents, teachers of color, and members of poor communities must be allowed to participate fully in the discussion of what kind of instruction is in their children's best interest. *Good liberal intentions are not*



**Key Findings from *Prevention Research Update Number Five: Substance Abuse Among Asian American Youth***

- Other than Native Hawaiians, whose drug and alcohol use is more similar to Whites, Asian Americans have low levels of use compared with other ethnic groups.
- Consistent with their low levels of use, Asian Americans suffer less from substance-related problems than do other ethnic groups, and most of these problems are male-owned.
- Drinking in Asian society is governed by social norms that condemn excessive use and encourage moderation.
- The more acculturated Asian males are, the higher their levels of alcohol use become.
- A concern among some researchers and practitioners is that Asian American substance use problems are underreported because of their "model minority" stereotype status and because they do not want to bring shame on their families.
- Prevention efforts should focus on (1) encouraging biculturalism; (2) involving youth in community prevention ; (3) providing indigenously owned family counseling and support services.

*enough*!" (p. 296). The incredibly successful outcomes in student achievement and teacher satisfaction that James Comer's Primary Prevention Program has experienced since its inception in 1968 testify to the critical importance for ethnic minority children of parent and teacher involvement in school management (Comer).

### **School Policy**

The second essential component is the collaborative development by this task force of a *mission statement/policy* that embraces the philosophy that the school is committed to *all* students receiving an education that continuously affirms human diversity, that validates the history and culture of *all* ethnic groups, that is based on high expectations for academic success for *all* students, and that encourages students' active participation in the school. Therefore, in a school with a large number of Black students, for example, all other cultures - Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Jewish, White, etc., - are valued. In other words, the racial/ethnic composition of the school is independent of its mission-implementing curriculum. According to Moses,

Successful [schools] establish a framework that places diversity not in the periphery but at the center of the [school's] mission and goals" (p. 406).

According to the Equity Institute, the ultimate goal of a multicultural society is not only fairness to others or appreciation of others but "reaching the stage of affection for and 'us-ness' with others." (p.3).

### **Redistribution of Power and Authority**

The third component in developing a culturally transformed school is the *redistribution of power and authority within the school and classroom*. Because the school is a microcosm of the larger society in which ethnic minorities --and youth!--have systemically been denied access to power, moving toward multiculturalism necessitates empowering ethnic minority children. While many curricular and pedagogical approaches are recommended, according to Kennedy's research on why so many educational innovations fail and to Rosen's study of why multicultural education programs, in particular, have failed, "Primary attention must be paid to the school as a social system and secondarily to the particular shifts in curriculum design and attention to students that a multicultural program demands. *It is, of course, far easier to tamper with curriculum or adopt a new slogan than to redesign the ways in which teachers, students, and administrators relate to one another. But such changes seem to be a prerequisite for successful introduction of pluralism into contemporary education*" (Rosen, p. 226). Similarly, Lewis concludes that, "Educational programs which fail to recognize the dominant group's stigmatizing of minority cultural competencies cannot promote the conditions for boundary interpenetration which are essential to multicultural learning" (p. 35).

Basic to establishing equality in our schools is the *restructuring* of the school system so that *all* teachers and *all* youth are given opportunities to work together, to make decisions, to participate in socially validated activities, and to be responsible. Critical to a restructuring effort which redistributes power in the classroom and school is the establishment of *cooperative learning* and other *peer resource* programs in which all youth and teachers are given opportunities to be leaders and to help others. According to Pinderhughes, "The more people are free to reach their own human potential, the more they will respect the rights of others to do so." (p. 12). Also, quoting Gordon Allport's classic work on prejudice, Moses states, "Cross-cultural acceptance comes not solely because of the contact, but because students [are given the opportunities to] get to know each other as people, learn where they share common values as well as what their differences are" (p. 410). After all, Rosen reminds us, the bottom line is that, "Children in school do not experience other cultures in some abstract sense. What they experience are other children and teachers who play different roles and are rewarded in different ways within the social system of the school" (p. 225).

Effectively redistributing power and restructuring our schools and classrooms and, thus, building multiculturalism, also necessitates dealing directly with the *issue of power*. Two major strategies discussed in the literature are cultural sensitivity training for school personnel and direct instruction in the issues of power for youth. The *cultural sensitivity training* process allows individuals to develop sensitivity to cultural identity and to the dynamics of power and powerlessness which profoundly affect the educational process. As Pinderhughes describes the process: "Participants examine personal experiences, perceptions, and feelings based on ethnicity, race, and power. They explore ethnic background and values, early awareness of cultural

differences, and significant experiences related to race and color identity. The final stage integrates this understanding in its examination of *power* not only as a factor in ethnic and racial dynamics but also in individual and family functioning. As a result of this experience, participants (1) acquire greater appreciation for and increased comfort in their interaction with culturally different others and (2) increase their ability to control stereotyping and vulnerability to using their power in the [teaching] encounter as compensation for powerlessness they experience elsewhere in their lives" (p. 5). Delpit warns that, "To act as if power does not exist is to ensure that the power status quo remains the same" (p. 292).

*Directly instructing* minority youth on the issue of power is considered by Delpit as essential. While students' own language and "expertness" must be validated, they also "must be *taught* the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life," that is, students must learn the rules of the "culture of power" (p. 296). Delpit states her argument as follows: "(1) Issues of power are enacted in classrooms; (2) there are codes or rules for participating in power; (3) the rules of the culture of power are a reflection of the rules of the culture of those who have power; (4) if you are not already a participant in the culture of power, being told explicitly the rules of that culture makes acquiring power easier; (5) those with power are frequently least aware of--or least willing to acknowledge--its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence" (p. 282). What Delpit's approach offers is really a way to encourage ethnic minority youth to acquire the skills (that is, "the ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing, and ways of interacting") necessary for success in the culture of power while still validating their own cultural identity and self-esteem. In other words, the direct instruction of youth in the issues of power provides a means for achieving the

### SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT...

If we could at this very moment shrink the earth's population (5.2 billion) to a village of precisely 1000, but all the existing human ratios remained the same, it would look like this:

There would be:

564 Asians and Oceanians  
210 Europeans  
86 Africans  
80 South Americans  
60 North Americans

\*820 of the 1000 would be non-White; 180 would be White

\*50 % of the entire world's wealth would be in the hands of only 60 people

\*700 would be unable to read; 500 would suffer from malnutrition; 600 would live in substandard housing

When one considers our world from such an incredibly compressed perspective, the need for both *tolerance* and *understanding* becomes glaringly apparent.

["Guess Who's Coming to Work," Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Education and Work Conference, November 1990, Harold Hodgkinson, Institute for Educational Leadership]

multiculturalism that will enable ethnic minority youth to successfully negotiate their ethnicity and the mainstream culture and accept and value other cultures as well.

We have dwelled on the issue of the redistribution of power and authority within the school because, as discussed earlier, the bottom line in eliminating racism and in creating a valuing of diversity is changing the process of *how* people relate to each other . We can have all the other components in place --a task force, a policy, and even a curriculum and programs--but unless power is redistributed through a restructuring effort, inequality will prevail.

## High Expectations by Teachers

A fourth essential component in establishing a school environment that celebrates diversity is closely related to the power issue: *high expectations by teachers for ethnic minority children and youth*. Perhaps no point has been reiterated in all the school effectiveness literature as much as this one. According to Vasquez, "It appears that a simple hint that a student is likely to perform well or poorly is sufficient to bring forth differential behaviors in the teacher" (p.244). Furthermore, "So powerful is the effect of a teacher's expectation on a student that it may be transmitted even when students hold *negative* expectations about the teacher!" (Vasquez, p. 244). Research has also clearly shown that teachers tend to have lower expectations for ethnic minority youth, who typically do not perform well in our schools as they are now structured. These low expectations get played out not only in interpersonal interactions but in instructional practices such as allowing access to gifted programs (which focus on the critical thinking and problem-solving skills that all youth need to succeed in the workplace) only to those students already performing well academically and, of major concern, giving "watered-down," remedial coursework to those who are not. In the last few years a handful of researchers and practitioners have been advocating giving students at academic risk an *enriched* curriculum that is usually reserved for successful students. Henry Levin's "Accelerated Schools" program and Robert Slavin's "Success For All" model have clearly demonstrated the importance of providing academically at-risk youth a rich curriculum that allows no room for failure and provides the support necessary to be successful. According to Lewis and Margold, parents and teachers must communicate their high expectations for success by conveying the following three messages to their ethnic minority

children: (1) You *can* learn; (2) you must learn in order to succeed; and (3) you may need to work with others to confront the limiting , denigrating conditions that make it difficult to succeed (p. 9).

### **Curriculum**

*Curriculum* is the last component for effective multicultural programming to discuss. While numerous strategies have been proposed and are being used that appear to effectively address the issue of creating a multicultural school, as we discussed earlier, the field of education is truly littered with the corpses of educational innovations that never succeeded because, in the absence of attitude change on the part of the teachers and administrators, they became just another curriculum or isolated skill to teach.

First, *multicultural content must be infused throughout the curriculum*. While social studies is a prime subject matter area in which to infuse such content, the common misconception exists that a "multicultural curriculum" only is relevant to social studies. Certainly a major focus on the study of the histories and cultures of all peoples in America is essential to overcome the incredible ethnocentrism and bias of most American history curricula. Furthermore, multiculturalism necessitates including in social studies a global education approach which includes the study of human values, global systems, global problems and issues, and the history of contacts and interdependence among peoples, cultures, and nations (O'Neil, p. 4). "Typically, American students--whether in elementary schools, high schools, or colleges--know little about other cultures, groups, and nations, and are suspicious and ethnocentric in their attitudes toward those who are different from themselves" (O'Neil, p. 3; Melendez). At this writing, we are bearing witness to a tragic ramification of this ignorance: the war in the Middle East . [According to a Gallop poll for the

National Geographic Society released in 1988. 75 percent of the adults surveyed did not know where the Persian Gulf was; unfortunately, young adults from 18-24 years old knew even less than adults over 55!

However, the study of culture (which is really what we're talking about) is the study of the richness of ways in which human beings solve the issues of life as an individual, group member, and integral systemic component of spaceship earth: academics, vocations, arts, and human relationships. What the study of cultures provides is the opportunity for students to learn an anthropological approach to viewing their society and world; that is, they would learn "to describe before they prescribe"; to listen without bias; to learn the difference between the usually confused concepts of culture, race and class; and to develop the critical thinking skills that are necessary to becoming a productive person in the future workforce. However, the greatest contribution is that "the study of culture--our species-specific and universal characteristic--is the best path we know of that can lead us to a meaningful understanding of what humans are, and what they can become" (Klass, p. 363).

Including in all this study the contributions of cultures other than Western European ones is one way to move toward multiculturalism. Before anyone throws up their hands in despair at their inability to get all this information, remember multiculturalism must take place in the context of a classroom organized cooperatively, and this organizational framework allows students working together to become the "experts" in different cultures. Furthermore, the study of culture would be greatly facilitated by an interdisciplinary, theme-focused curriculum instead of a fragmented subject-based one. Second, an important issue in working toward multiculturalism is that of *language*. It is essential to value the primary language of language-minority children, even



**Consider this:** On any given day in Massachusetts, 200 Black children from the Boston slums ride the bus to go to school in the suburban town of Lexington. They begin in kindergarten and, although they are provided with a lot of counseling, their education is the same as that which is afforded to their affluent White classmates. *Virtually every non-White child bused to Lexington from Boston finishes 12 years of school and graduates; most go to four-year colleges.* Low-income Black children of the same abilities, consigned to public school in Boston, have at best a 24% chance of the same success.

[Jonathan Kozol, 1990]

giving them language credit for this facility, encouraging them to develop their primary language skills, and allowing them to speak their primary language except when English is the focus of instruction. On the flip side, English-only students should learn a second language through a mandatory foreign language requirement beginning as early in their school career as English is begun for non-English-speaking students.. As we discussed earlier, the ability to develop cross-cultural competencies will be important to career success for all youth. Furthermore, cooperative learning and peer tutoring are ideal arrangements for youth to teach each other.

A third issue that must be addressed is that *ethnic minority children must not be stereotyped as having an ethnic-specific learning style.* While people, including researchers, love to pigeonhole and stereotype, cultural diversity and *within-culture diversity* or *intra-ethnic variation*, as well as individual differences due to intermixing of cultures, varying degrees of acculturation, and just plain individual difference make any stereotyping a dangerous action. According to Gilbert, "The prevalent bureaucratic practice of creating catch-all 'ethnic' labels such as Hispanic, Native American, or Asian is an obstacle to the design of culturally relevant programs" (p. 45). Asa Hilliard, a leading multicultural education expert and advocate, concluded after years of studying

the role of learning and teaching style in the education of minority youth that "the explanation for the low performance of culturally different minority group students will not be found by pursuing questions of behavioral style." He believes, rather, "that the children, no matter what their style, are failing primarily because of systematic inequities in the delivery of whatever pedagogical approach the teachers claim to master [usually reflecting their low expectations]--not because students cannot learn from teachers whose styles do not match their own" (p. 68). What we see here, once again, is the importance of attitude, not of specific teaching strategy! Hilliard and others recommend becoming sensitive to each student's own learning style and using a repertoire of teaching strategies to meet the varying needs of each child. (McRobbie; Carlson).

One last issue in building multiculturalism in our schools is *personnel*. Whenever possible, we need to hire ethnic minority teachers, teachers with a second-language competency, and teachers with English as Second Language (ESL) training. We also need to provide inservice trainings in ESL to existing teachers. An incredible shortage of minority teachers now exists, however, and the outlook for the future is even more grim given that fewer Blacks are now enrolled in universities than in 1960. According to Leake, "If national trends persist, more than 90 percent of the teaching force will be White, serving a student population that is over 30 percent non-White." What obviously needs to happen is on state and national levels, minorities must be encouraged, recruited, and given financial incentives to become teachers. The importance to all students of exposure to successful teachers of other ethnic groups cannot be overstated (Holmes).

The above four issues--infusion, language study, individual learning style, and personnel needs--are key to creating a multiculturally sensitive school.

Numerous specific strategies exist that are also basic to successful prevention programming for all youth and especially for ethnic minority youth, strategies that are topics of study in their own right: reduced class size; home-school collaboration; middle school reform; culturally sensitive assessment tools; buddy systems; peer resource programs; student support groups; rap groups; mentoring programs; international exchange programs; school-to-work transition programs; school-based social and health services; youth service; career education; after-school, Saturday, and summer programs; student cultural organizations; cross-district integration programs such as magnet schools; K-8 schools; keeping the same teacher for at least two years in elementary school; etc.! etc! etc! However, many of these strategies will flow naturally once you have a school that has bought into a multiculturalism perspective. Without this attitude, these strategies become just more add-on programs that take time, energy, and money from "more important pursuits."

Ron Edmunds, the "father" of effective schools research, once said,

"There has never been a time in the life of the American public school when we have not known all we needed in order to teach all those whom we choose to teach" (quoted in Dash, p. 27 ). "What has historically been lacking, no less today than in the past, is the *commitment and will* to 'choose to teach' all the children who enter our nation's schools" (Bain in Dash, p. 27). If we are truly concerned with prevention of problems such as substance abuse, delinquency, and teen pregnancy, we as a *nation* must commit ourselves to ensuring that all people have access to health care, child care, housing, adequate nutrition, education, and employment opportunities. We must make our commitment and exert our collective will to ensure that two ends are achieved: all youth are

given the opportunities to celebrate their respective cultures as well as the opportunities to experience academic success. If we make these two goals inseparable, "Education will move from being in crisis to being what it can and should be: the seed ground for a more just and vital culture" (Moses, p. 400). Furthermore, as Morton Deutsch reminds us, "In recent years it has been increasingly recognized that our schools have to change in basic ways if we are to educate children ["beyond hate"] so that they are for rather than against one another, so they develop the ability to resolve their conflicts constructively rather than destructively, so they are prepared to live in a peaceful world" (p. 1). And, I would add, so they will help *build* a peaceful world.

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