Appendix: Proceedings and Recommendations from the Wingspread Conference

Racine, Wisconsin, September 2005

From September 19–21, 2005, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE)* convened a group of representatives from major national educational associations and higher education institutions at the Wingspread Conference Center to discuss the need to prepare highly qualified teachers to better teach the increasing numbers of linguistically diverse children in PK-12 classrooms. Culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student populations often present unique challenges to their school communities. Given the trends in demographic changes in the United States, it is crucial that we identify and implement policies and practices that respond to the specific needs and characteristics of these CLD children and provide them with equal opportunities to achieve.

The conference addressed these pressing realities through dialogue on knowledge, practice, and current policy issues. Discussions were based on the research, practices, and policies described in the book being prepared by members of the AACTE Committee on Multicultural Education of 2003–2005. Participants reviewed definitions and requirements for “highly qualified” teachers in 35 states and formulated recommendations for development of language standards for teacher preparation and program accreditation. A statement redefining “high quality” teacher preparation to include the role of culture and language was also formulated as result of the conference discussions. This

*The conference was cosponsored by AACTE, the Johnson Foundation, the National Education Association, and Lumina Foundation.
Statement and recommendations represents a consensus of participant individuals and institutions with the goal of impacting policies for the preparation of better teachers for all children.

Among the 35 conference participants were representatives from various major education associations and members of the AACTE board of directors. The diverse group of conferencee included also college presidents, deans, researchers, and faculty members, as well as an elementary teacher from Boston Public Schools, a doctoral student, and an undergraduate Wingspread student fellow (see participant list below).

Background for the Discussions

Policy

Requirements on teacher quality established by Title II of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) have challenged states to examine and reform their teacher certification processes and ensure that teachers have mastery of their content areas (Education Commission of the States, 2002). Additionally, new accountability measures established in the NCLB call for English language learners (ELLs) to be assessed yearly regardless of language ability, which is an immense challenge for most states and districts. ELL children are expected to develop English proficiency within 3 years of enrollment and are expected to meet the same academic content and achievement standards that all children are expected to meet.

Demographics

Whereas 40% of children in K–12 schools in the United States today are from minority or diverse backgrounds and 20% come from homes where languages other than Standard English are spoken (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES] 2003), only about 14% of all teachers are from minority backgrounds and less than 12% have received training to teach ELLs (NCES, 2002).

Statement of the Problem

Teachers are coming out of teacher preparation programs with minimal tools or no training to help them address the needs of CLD children (Menken & Antunez, 2001; NCES, 2002). ELL and African American students who are not proficient in Standard English are disproportionately overrepresented in special education classes, in language–speech pathology services, and in school dropouts. Thus, CLD populations present unique challenges to the development of appropriate educational services in the communities in which they reside. It is imperative to formulate more culturally responsive educational policies and practices and prepare teachers who are ready to respond to the specific linguistic needs and characteristics of these children.

Summary of Discussions

Language in the classroom holds the key to CLD students’ access to education; however, language and culture are not explicit on current definitions of the term “highly qualified teacher” (HQT), both at the state and national levels. Some state definitions single-out special education. Why not language? Should English as a second language (ESL) and special education be treated different?

What’s Missing from Definitions of Highly Qualified Teachers?

Current HQT definitions at the federal level and most state levels include:

- Bachelor’s degree
- Demonstrated competency in content
- Licensure for the assignment.

Not included in HQT definitions are:

- Professional dispositions toward teaching
- Knowledge, skills, and dispositions specific to language and cultural competencies
- Ability of teacher preparation programs to instill in students those particular knowledge, skills, and dispositions
• Knowledge of the local community
• Empathy
• CLD paraprofessionals
• ESL as core area
• Faculty professional development.

Why Is It So?

Obstacles to addressing language and culture in definitions of HQT can be found in the current policy context, in definitions of diversity, in policy holes, and in teacher preparation institutions and associations.

Obstacles in Current Policy Context
• Federal and state authorities are working against strong teacher preparation programs (e.g., NCLB defines HQT purely in relation to content knowledge; Texas does not require student teaching for certification).
• Colleges and schools of education are seen as creating obstacles to the preparation of teachers.
• Recommendations that address strengthening teacher preparation requirements regarding diversity are actively resisted at all levels.

Obstacles in Definitions of Diversity
• Expanded conceptions of diversity create confusion about priority areas in equity and social justice.
• Lack of priority in conceptions of diversity promotes “safe” diversity experiences.
• Absence of reference to language in definitions of diversity, skirts a crucial need to achieve success in school.

Obstacles in Policy Holes
• NCLB and some state laws and standards promote content knowledge and ignore all other essential aspects of teacher preparation (e.g., pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of the students and community).
• NCLB and some state laws ignore scientific findings and diminish the importance of first language development in ELL student achievement.
• Assessment of teacher proficiency in educating ELLs is problematic if not absent.

Obstacles in Teacher Preparation Institutions and Associations
• Diffusion of responsibility
• Failure to socialize conflict

Recommendations

Recognizing the previously mentioned obstacles, how should we develop recommendations for a solution?

Guiding Principles for a Solution

• Increasing the diversity of teachers will help solve many of the problems of student achievement among CLD students. This will require major efforts to recruit teachers (especially from within the local school community), retain them, and create increasing prestige for the teaching profession.
• Recruiting teachers who are members of local communities enables the development of effective standards.
• Preparing all teachers to effectively teach children from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds must be a prime goal of teacher preparation programs.

To ensure that all teachers are prepared for CLD students, changes must be effected in:

• Institutional policy
• Accreditation agencies (e.g., National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, Teacher Education Accreditation Council)
• National professional organizations or Specialized Professional Associations (SPAs)
• Federal definition and legislation of HQT
• State regulations for licensing.

Recommendations on Teacher Recruitment
• Provide more resources for recruiting CLD teacher candidates.
• Create incentives for entering and remaining in the teaching profession (e.g., loan forgiveness, differentiated career progression opportunities).
• Recruit teacher candidates from members of local communities.
Recommendations for Policy on Teacher Certification

- Reaffirm the three essential dimensions of teacher preparation: (1) knowledge of students—how they learn, their languages, communities, and families; (2) knowledge of subject matter (including language), and (3) knowledge of teaching and learning (pedagogy).
- Paramount in the development of a HQT should be the ability to connect what is being taught in classrooms to the needs and interests of the communities from which the students come.

Recommendations for Teacher Preparation Programs

- Reaffirm the commitment to field experience as a requirement for certification.
- Require the immersion of teacher candidates in the communities of the schools in which they will teach.
- Provide training and experience in assessment of student performance for CLD students.
- Require courses in language development and second language acquisition for all teacher candidates.
- Identify and prepare cooperating teachers who are sensitive to community interests and who can provide positive experiences for student teachers.
- Situate teacher preparation in local communities (e.g., site-based methods classes, professional development schools).

Recommendations for AACTE and Other National Associations and Organizations

- Share these issues with stakeholders (e.g., national education groups such as Learning First Alliance).
- Socialize the conflict or problem.
- Bring it to the table.
- Decide what we can agree to do.
- Formulate a policy statement.
- Seek public support through the media.

How to Do This?

1. Develop a website for CLD student populations.
2. Update and reissue the 2002 AACTE white paper on CLD teacher preparation.
3. Organize a regional conference or hearing sponsored by AACTE, Teachers of English as a Second Language (TESOL)/National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE), Association of Teacher Educators (ATE), and state legislators.
4. Develop a resource directory and network of people working on these issues.
5. Include in AACTE’s national annual conference sessions on this issue.
6. Include in AACTE’s national annual conference a conference strand on CLD students.
7. Address issues of language and culture at the ATE conference.
8. Continue discussions with TEAC on ways to address culture and language in its accreditation process.
9. Encourage and sponsor political training for faculty at JFK (Harvard) School of Government.
10. Create an advocacy group to develop an action plan to influence policy.

Recommendations for Accrediting Agencies: Teacher preparation for culturally and linguistically diverse students must be made explicit in all accreditation standards and candidates must demonstrate competency in teaching CLD student populations.

How to Do This?

- Revise accreditation standards (such as those of National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], Teacher Education Accreditation Council [TEAC], and State Education Agency [SEA]) to explicitly address language and culture knowledge, skills, and dispositions.
- Develop a rubric for assessing language and culture knowledge, skills, and dispositions.
- Develop definitions of dispositions that address language and culture within accreditation guidelines.
- Award a unit that emphasizes CLD populations in accreditation (at AACTE annual meeting).

Specific Recommendations to Revise and Enforce NCATE’s Training and Compliance of Standard 4. Currently:

- Even if element 3 (candidate diversity) is not met, standard 4 is met when element 1 (curriculum and experiences) is fulfilled.
- The standard does not enforce, check, or assess involvement with communities and families.

NCATE should:

- Revise wording in standard 4
• Revise target for standard 4, element 1
• Revise supporting explanation for standards 1, 5, and 3
• Insert language related to ELLs in standard 3.

Recommendations for Professional Associations
• Standards for professional associations (e.g., National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, Association for Childhood Education International, National Association for the Education of Young Children) should clearly address the preparation of teachers for CLD and ELL populations.
• Standards must overlay such that content standards clearly reflect teaching CLD student populations and CLD standards clearly reflect the teaching of content.
• Issues of CLD and ELL students should apply not only to preservice teacher preparation but also to practicing in-service teachers and faculty as well.

Recommendations for Revisions to Current Definitions of Highly Qualified Teachers
• In addition to content knowledge, teachers must have skills, knowledge, and demonstrated competencies on how culture and language functions in the classroom and how to apply this knowledge with a full range of children from various backgrounds.
• Language is part of the "content knowledge" teachers must have. ESL should be considered a core academic area.
• A HQT should be empathetic about the role of language and culture in teaching and learning as demonstrated through practice, including but not limited to, field experiences, course work, and professional development.

Questions Going Forward

Are we assuming that teaching is the only key to making change and ensuring achievement? This issue must be framed as part of a broader social, political, economic, and cultural agenda focused on improving the academic achievement and broader social access of students, including those historically denied access. Furthering this goal requires answering the following questions.

How Do We Affect Policy?

The appropriate mechanisms need to be identified and the right people contacted. Further conversations should be carried out with such people as:

a. Policy makers
b. Great city schools
c. Board of education members
d. Superintendents
e. State commissioners
f. Education Commission of the States forum.

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Proposed Highly Qualified Teacher Definition

Wingspread Conference September 21, 2005

Rationale

In the existing definitions of HQT, attention to language is missing. We believe that HQTs must communicate the benefit of knowing and using more than one language, must have high expectations of children regardless of proficiency in English, and must know and respect linguistically and culturally diverse students and their families.

Defining Highly Qualified Teachers

- All HQTs who use English as the medium of instruction must be English language teachers as it relates to their content area (i.e., a teacher who teaches biology must also teach the language to do biology).
- All HQTs must have a set of guided experiences in schools and school communities with culturally and linguistically diverse students, families, and community partners.
- All HQTs must be able to demonstrate the ability to work with CLD students to develop language and literacy, to succeed academically, and to successfully function in school and their communities.
- All HQTs must be able to use culturally relevant teaching techniques and exhibit dispositions that reflect the above requirements.
- The preparation of a HQT would include coursework that speaks to language, culture, and community.
- All HQTs will have had coursework and experiences that prepare them for the above requirements.

References


Endnote

1. Alicia Ardila-Rey, from AACTE, is the primary author of this report, which compiles contributions from the conference participants listed at the end of the document.