

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force was formed in April of 2002 to provide guidance and direction on: (a) the refinement and delivery of culturally relevant pedagogy and (b) professional development that will enhance teaching and learning for all children. In undertaking these efforts, the Task Force was responding to need to close the achievement gaps between students of different economic backgrounds, and between White students and students of color. The Task Force was made up of internal staff representatives, local experts, parents, and community leaders. On average, the Task Force met as a group every two weeks. In addition, the Task Force opted to form six subcommittees to accomplish specific objectives.

The purpose of this report is to present the findings and recommendations of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force for improving overall cultural responsiveness throughout the District. The majority of this document consists of detailed reports from each of the Task Force subcommittees – namely, the Needs Assessment and Literature Review Subcommittee, the Values Subcommittee, the Pedagogy Refinement Subcommittee, the Training Subcommittee, the Community Outreach Subcommittee, and the Customer Service Initiative Subcommittee. A section that identifies and explains the overall recommendations of the Task Force follows the subcommittee reports. In addition, this report introduces a recommended tool for monitoring the overall success and effectiveness of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning initiative.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND LITERATURE REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

The Needs Assessment and Literature Review Subcommittee was charged with conducting an assessment to determine the needs of campuses in their efforts to eliminate the achievement gap. In response to this charge, the Needs Assessment and Literature Review Subcommittee designed and circulated a needs assessment and opinion survey to campuses. The subcommittee has reviewed the data and identifies its findings and recommendations in its report.

The Needs Assessment and Literature Review Subcommittee was also charged with identifying, collecting, and disseminating literature relevant to the work of the Task Force for use by Task Force members and subcommittees. As a result, the Subcommittee has collected, organized, and shared a large amount of literature among Task Force members. In its report, the Needs Assessment and Literature Review Subcommittee makes recommendations as to the ways that these resources may be used and disseminated throughout the District.

VALUES SUBCOMMITTEE

The Values Subcommittee was given the charge of looking at the current values and beliefs of the District in the area of cultural responsiveness. In completing its work, the Values Subcommittee met with the heads of eight District departments, including Human Resources, Special Education, Curriculum, Gifted & Talented, Student Discipline, Alternative Learning Center, Guidance & Counseling, Dropout Prevention & Reduction. In its report, the Values Subcommittee presents recommendations relating to Cultural Responsiveness; Recruitment and Retention of People of Color for Staff Positions; Gifted & Talented Programs; Advanced Placement, and Honors Programs and Classes; Special Education; Discipline and Referrals; and Grievance Procedures.

PEDAGOGY SUBCOMMITTEE

The Pedagogy Subcommittee was given the charge of examining the issue of pedagogy and making recommendations for ensuring that teaching and learning throughout the District responds to and is reflective of the District's diversity. In addition, the Pedagogy Subcommittee was charged with developing a systematic process for creating leadership and benchmarks, and integrating strategies into daily operations at the District, school, and classroom levels. In its report, the Pedagogy Subcommittee identifies five themes that were noted from its meetings with key District personnel and nationally known experts. Based on these themes, the Pedagogy Subcommittee presents its recommendations for improving the cultural responsiveness of pedagogy throughout the District.

TRAINING SUBCOMMITTEE

The Training Subcommittee was given the charge of assisting the District in the implementation of a training model for District staff in the area of diversity and cultural responsiveness in teaching and learning. The Training Subcommittee was further charged with ensuring that any training offered has a special emphasis on (1) prejudice reduction; (2) heightened awareness on the part of administrators and teachers of the interrelationship between culture and teaching and learning; and (3) the training of select District staff members to lead training efforts on campuses and in central office departments.

The Training Subcommittee, with the approval and support of the entire Task Force, selected the National Coalition Building Institute as the provider of diversity training in the District. In March of 2003, principals and a handful of other campus administrators from all high schools in the District underwent training with NCBI. In May of 2003, each high school identified 6-8 additional campus representatives to receive the NCBI training.

In its report, the Training Subcommittee makes recommendations about the process by which training should be carried out throughout the District, and the ways by which that training should be enforced and monitored.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE

The Community Outreach Subcommittee was charged with coordinating the flow of information from the Task Force to the community, as well as soliciting, gathering, and sharing the advice and feedback of the community on the Task Force's work. In accomplishing its charge, the Community Outreach Subcommittee organized and held the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Community Forum in January of 2003. In its report, the Community Outreach Subcommittee shares the feedback of the community from the Community Forum, and presents recommendations for ensuring open and active communication between the District and the community about the Cultural Connections initiative.

CUSTOMER SERVICE INITIATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

The Customer Service Initiative Subcommittee was charged with reviewing the District's initiative to improve customer service on campuses and at central office, and ascertain whether the Task Force could embrace and support the initiative. In its report, the Customer Service Initiative Subcommittee makes its recommendations and offers ways to improve the initiative.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the recommendations that originated with the work of the subcommittees, the Task Force identified several overall recommendations. Since these overall recommendations are not easily identified with the work of any specific subcommittee, they are identified in a separate section of the report.

PROGRAM EVALUATION LOGIC MODEL

Accountability is key to any successful initiative. For this reason, the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force, in conjunction with the District's Office of Program Evaluation, developed an Evaluation Logic Model that identifies the desired outcomes of the Cultural Connections initiative, and provides a road map for accomplishing those outcomes.