



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR
URBAN SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT

eNEWS



NATIONAL CENTER FOR
Culturally Responsive
Educational Systems



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

UPDATE

NOTICES

SPOTLIGHT

PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

RECOMMENDED READINGS

TOOLS YOU CAN USE

RESEARCH BASED PRODUCTS

FEATURED STATE WORK

FEATURED DISTRICT WORK

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

FEATURED WEBSITES

JOB OPENINGS

DID YOU KNOW...

UPCOMING EVENTS

UPDATE

This eNEWS is sent formatted in HTML. If the graphics do not display properly, please go to: www.nccrest.org or www.urbanschools.org to view the eNEWS online. Back issues of the eNEWS are also available there.

NOTICES

NEW

OSEP

DIRECTOR

Dr. Alexa Posny has been announced as the Director of the Office of Special Education Programs effective April 17, 2006. Since 2001, Dr. Posny has served as the Deputy Commissioner of Education in the Kansas State Department of Education. As Deputy Commissioner, she is responsible for the overall operation of the Division of Learning Services. She provides leadership and supervision in the delivery of services for school districts and teacher preparation institutions regarding school improvement and accreditation, licensure and teacher education, state and federal education programs, special education and technical education, and planning and research. Kansas is viewed as a national leader in including students with disabilities in the Statewide Accountability System under Dr. Posny's leadership. She has been invited to OSEP and OESE on numerous occasions to share the State's experience implementing alternate assessments under IDEA and the No Child Left Behind assessment provisions for students with disabilities.

SPOTLIGHT

GOOD

a film
for F.A.S.E.

27 minutes, color

Kay Toliver, a middle school mathematics teacher at East Harlem Tech, has found creative, student-centered techniques for engaging her students and improving their achievement. *Good Morning Miss Toliver*, at first glance, appears to be a pedagogical exploration, illustrating one teacher's strategies for interdisciplinary and interactive teaching and hands-on learning. But Miss Toliver's teaching and the film documenting it are much more complex and valuable than that.

Miss Toliver knows that every student can achieve and she communicates that to them individually and collectively. She encourages and rewards critical thinking and creative problem solving. She facilitates experiences in which students connect their classroom learning to their everyday lives, making lessons fun, and more importantly, relevant. Though her demonstrations are powerful, the most important voices in this film are those of her students. They recognize her expectations and express their appreciation for her encouragement.

Good Morning Miss Toliver is an excellent resource for connecting classroom practice and the expectations gap to the achievement gap. It is one of the few films I have reviewed that successfully illustrates multicultural classroom practice—the saturation of daily education with multicultural teaching and learning philosophy. Equally important is the fact that Miss Toliver teaches mathematics, a subject many argue is culture- and value-free.

MORNING

by

Kay

MISS

Toliver

TOLIVER



PEOPLE IN THE NEWS

EDWARD LEE VARGAS

Superintendent Dr. Edward Lee Vargas of the Hacienda La Puente Unified School District has been named as the California Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) nominee for the prestigious American Association of School Administrators' (AASA) National Superintendent of the Year Award.

"To be honored in this way is truly an award to the dedicated team with who I work," said Vargas. "It has been said that one is only as good as the people whom you are surrounded by. I have been blessed in HLPUSD to work with some of the most outstanding professionals in my career, caring and dedicated administrators, teachers and support staff, a great school board that works as a team and a broad base of support for education from parent groups, civic leaders and the community."

The AASA Superintendent of the Year Award candidates are judged on the criteria of leadership for learning, communication skills, professionalism and community involvement. Vargas has been recognized as an advocate and champion for special education. He has advised the U.S. Department of Education over the reauthorization of IDEA, speaking before former Secretary of Education Rod Paige and has served on two National Academy of Science Committees on School Reform. He has been recognized for his leadership on school reform by AASA, the Los Angeles County Bilingual Directors Association, United Way and the California Department of



Education. One of his key issues is to stand up for underrepresented groups, which is why he formed the Superintendent's Task Force for Equity at HLPUSD.

The Hacienda La Puente Unified School District is the largest school district in San Gabriel Valley, serving a total of 87,000 Pre-K-12- adult students; 24,000 Pre-K-12, 30,000 adult education students at two main facilities and 32 satellite sites and 33,000 students at eight correctional facilities throughout Los Angeles County. The District serves the communities of City of Industry, City of La Puente and the unincorporated Los Angeles County areas of Hacienda Heights and Valinda. The District includes 20 K-5 elementary schools, four K-8 schools, six middle schools, four comprehensive high schools, one alternative high school, a learning center, an orthopedic unit for students with disabilities, an Instructional Services Center, a Multilingual Assessment Center, a Curriculum Lab and an extensive child development program. For more information, please visit the District's website at www.hlpusd.k12.ca.us.

CARLA SANTORNO

Carla Santorno is Seattle Public Schools' new top academic officer. During a job-interview forum last month, she won over a crowd of parents and community members by listening to their concerns and emphasizing her dedication to their priorities -- such as improving advanced placement offerings and closing the achievement gap between white and minority students.

In Denver, where she's been a longtime educator and administrator, Santorno listened to the teachers union and instituted exit surveys for educators who left the district -- helping pinpoint ways to reduce turnover. Many in Seattle are now hoping she can help turn the academically and financially challenged district around. Santorno won't start her job until late April, but she's already doing her homework. She spent two days this week in Seattle, meeting with senior managers, gathering test data and being briefed by a citizens' advisory committee on their proposals to balance the district's budget.

She wants to further analyze district data and talk to teachers, parents and students before rolling out a plan to boost academic achievement. "I measure my success by real results and whether I have a good pulse on what's going on in schools -- not just whether everybody feels good about me," she said. "I'm going to be much more visible in schools. I'm taking seriously my commitment to raise achievement for every kid -- and you can't do that from the (administration) building. You have to get out into the classrooms."

Santorno earned her master's degree in elementary education from the University of Colorado-Denver, then went on to become an elementary school teacher and principal. She ended her tenure in Denver Public Schools as director of curriculum and instruction. For the past four years, she's been responsible for 34 schools in the district's gritty northeast quadrant -- where the poverty rate is high and many students have limited English language skills. Santorno was credited with helping boost achievement among several struggling schools there, largely by hiring strong principals and instituting a common curriculum, so that lessons are consistent for each grade level at every school.

Santorno has long been interested in closing the achievement gap. She's been a strong advocate for cultural-competence training for teachers and other school employees, and has made efforts to get parents -- especially parents of students of color -- more involved in schools.

Colleagues say her concern for making sure children are getting a quality education is genuine. "That's something Carla really values," said Kim Ursetta, president of the Denver teachers union. "... She's really into making sure the kids are able to identify with what they're learning."

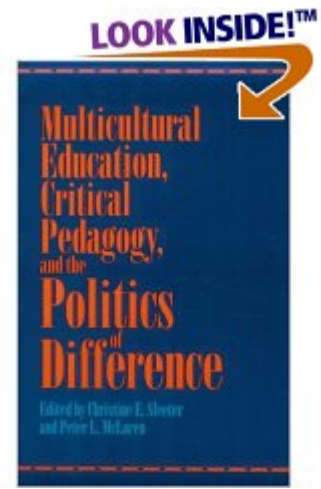


RECOMMENDED READINGS

Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy, and the Politics of Difference

By Christine E. Sleeter

This book explores and expands upon linkages between multicultural education and critical pedagogy, drawing on the shared goal of challenging oppressive social relationships. "Here is a comprehensive view of leading theories and practices of multicultural education from scholars of various racial and ethnic groups. The perspectives of those often left out of scholarly debate are well represented in this book. Those perspectives offer significant insights into the ways in which dominant ideologies and classroom practices have functioned to serve only one segment of the American population. The connections between multicultural education and critical pedagogy are brought into clear focus and illustrate how different ways of teaching and learning can benefit all students instead of just a few." -- Sandra M. Lawrence, Mount Holyoke College



About

the

Author

Christine E. Sleeter is Professor of Teacher Education at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, where she teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in multicultural education. She is the author of *Keepers of the American Dream*, editor of *Empowerment Through Multicultural Education*, and coeditor (with Joseph M. Larkin) of *Developing Multicultural Curricula*, both published by SUNY Press. She recently won the 1994 Research Award of the National Association for Multicultural Education. Peter McLaren is Associate Professor in the Graduate School of Education and Information at the University of California, Los Angeles. He is the author of *Life in Schools*. He is the coeditor (with Henry A. Giroux) of *Critical Pedagogy, the State, and Cultural Struggle*, (with Colin Lankshear) *Critical Literacy: Politics, Praxis, and the Postmodern*, (with James Giarelli) *Critical Theory and Educational Research*, all published by SUNY Press, and (with Colin Lankshear) *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter*. He is also the editor of the Internationalist Department of the *International Journal of Educational Reform*.

TOOLS YOU CAN USE

NIUSI'S NEW ONPOINT

The Building Leadership Team OnPoint by the National Institute for Urban School Improvement also in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Education, the Peak Parent Center and the Silc Road is now available.

A Building Leadership Team (BLT) is a school-based group of individuals who work to provide strong organizational process for school renewal and improvement. BLTs orchestrate the work of school professionals, administrators, families, and students through the school improvement process. This process includes the examination of current, successful practices and also those areas that are of concern to the school community. In addition, BLTs plan for progress, achievement, and risk.

This OnPoint discusses the importance of Building Leadership Teams. It goes through all the steps that are necessary such as, how to pick members, how to make meetings productive, how to handle decision making processes, as well as how to plan for the future.

To download this OnPoint go to www.urbanschools.org, click on publications, then OnPoints then 'Building Leadership Teams' or follow this [link](#).

NCCREST'S PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MODULE

Collection and Use of Evidence Module Overview

Notice the number of times that data and evidence appear in NCCREST's principles. Saying that teachers, families and administrators need data to make decisions is one thing, understanding and using data well is another. In fact, few teachers and administrators have been educated in programs that have focused on making meaning from data and then using those analyses to guide school improvement and classroom instruction. This module is designed to help building leadership teams learn the skills required to mine data and use it to make decisions. As principals and teacher leaders become confident in their ability to query their data, they will become strong role models and coaches for the entire faculty.

In this module we take a serious look at understanding and using data and other evidence of student performance to improve student learning. We begin by looking at school level data to identify patterns in school performance. We then examine data to understand school structures and then look at issues of pedagogy and practice. Participants will consider a variety of measures of academic performance by asking tough questions about data such as: What do students need to know? How will we know if students have learned it? Who is successful? Who is not? What will we do if students have not learned what they need to know? Working steadily and continuously as a team, school faculty and administrators can become successful with all, not just some, of their students.

Academy 1: Mining Meaningful Data

This Academy helps participants develop their skills to analyze data over time to adjust and improve their strategies for instructional improvement. The activities in this module begin with personal reflection by participants on values and beliefs about the identification, collection and use of data for school improvement. It continues with a brief overview of the new accountability systems, moves to current methods being used by school systems and how this affects all students, and ends with an activity that requires participants to continue their reflection on tracking data that they can use to prepare for subsequent activities. Participants use data from their own district or another district in their state to begin to examine the link between data and practice changes.

Academy 2: Identifying School-Wide Patterns of Student Performance

This Academy helps participants develop their skills to analyze and use data over time to adjust and improve their strategies for instructional improvement.

Academy 3: Looking at Student Work to Target Instruction

In this Academy, participants learn to examine student work samples to target instruction and link aggregated student work data to make changes school wide.

To download this module go to www.nccrest.org then click on Professional Development then 'Collection and Use of Evidence' or follow this [link](#).

MEETING THE LITERACY DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF ADOLESCENT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS THROUGH CONTENT AREA LEARNING

A two-part report from the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory (LAB) and The Education Alliance at Brown University reveals considerable overlap between effective strategies for improving literacy in ELLs and effective strategies for adolescents in general. Researchers have outlined motivational strategies (Part One) as well as instructional practices (Part Two) that develop the language skills and thinking skills necessary for academic literacy in both native and non-native English speaking adolescents. Despite the fact that these strategies are shown to be effective, they are not commonly used for either population in today's secondary classrooms. The authors recommend comprehensive training for teachers on the issues affecting ELLs and a commitment to using literacy-building strategies, such as those proposed in their report, that have proven to be effective for all secondary students.

To read the report, click on the links below:

- [Part One: Focus on Motivation and Engagement](#)
- [Part Two: Focus on Classroom Teaching and Learning Strategies](#)

FEATURED STATE WORK NCCREST YEAR FOUR, QUARTER ONE REPORT

The National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (NCCRESt) has just completed its first quarter of work for year four from November 1, 2005 through January 31, 2006. The purpose of this report is to summarize the activities within the project goals, Continuous Improvement, Research and Development, Professional Development, and Networking and Dissemination. In addition, the report provides a blueprint for next quarter's activities and short profiles of partner state work, accomplished within the quarter. Participating states include Connecticut, Iowa, Louisiana, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin. This document can be found on the NCCRESt website at www.nccrest.org click on resources & publications then technical reports or follow this [link](#).

FEATURED DISTRICT WORK NIUSI YEAR FOUR, QUARTER ONE REPORT

The National Institute for Urban School Improvement (NIUSI) has also completed its first quarter of work for year four from October 15, 2005 through January 15, 2006. The purpose of this report is to summarize the activities within the project goals, Continuous Improvement, Research and Development, Professional Development, and Networking and Dissemination. Nine districts of the 100 largest urban school systems comprise the Synergy Sites where NIUSI has memorandums of understanding that create partnerships with the districts to engage in all five project goals through shared resources and joint planning for professional development and technical assistance. The nine Synergy Sites are: Chicago Public Schools, Clark County Schools in Las Vegas, Denver Public Schools, Cincinnati Public Schools, District of Columbia Schools, Hacienda La Puente Unified School District, California, Houston Independent School District, Miami-Dade County Public Schools, and New York, Region 4 and Region 10. In addition, the report provides a blueprint for next quarter's activities and short profiles of partner district work accomplished within the quarter. This document can be found on the NIUSI website at www.urbanschools.org click on publications then technical reports or follow this [link](#).

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"Color is not a human or a personal reality; it is a political reality."
-James Baldwin, 1963

FEATURED WEBSITES

NATIVE AMERICAN K-12 CLASSROOM RESOURCES

Below are great websites with helpful Native American classroom resources. Check these sites out if you are a K-12 teacher and need ideas for your classroom.

Declarations of Independence

http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/20021125monday.html?searchpv=learning_lessons

A Historic Gamble

http://www.nytimes.com/learning/teachers/lessons/20040216monday.html?searchpv=learning_lessons

Create Your Own Native American Board Game

<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/nativeamericans/>

Trails of Understanding: The Earliest Immigrants

<http://school.discovery.com/lessonplans/programs/earliestimmigrants/>

The American Indians

<http://www.americanindians.com/>

Native American Cultures: A Door to American Heritage

http://www.mcps.k12.md.us/schools/argylems/lessons/native_am/NativeAm.htm

JOB OPENINGS

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY POSITIONS

The School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center announces two tenure-track, faculty positions in the School Psychology program beginning in the Fall of 2006. For more information follow this [link](#).

SPECIAL EDUCATION POSITION

The School of Education at the University of Colorado at Denver and Health Sciences Center announces an open rank tenure-track faculty position in the Special Education program beginning in the Fall Term 2006. For more information follow this [link](#).

DID YOU KNOW...

...that you can customize the NIUSI library to personally accommodate your needs? The site contains an online survey that teachers and principals can take to locate areas of improvement in their schools. When the survey is completed it sends you a customized list of resource that fit your needs. Attached to this Liaison is an email blast that you can send to your network so that they know why and how to access the 5,000 entry library that is full of good ideas for improving practices in schools.

How it works: All you have to do is go to our website www.urbanschools.org and click on the library or follow this link (<http://niusi.edreform.net>) Then click on the survey button on the left hand side. Once you sign in for a free account, you can take the survey that will locate areas of improvement that your school needs. In just a few seconds you will receive an email containing links to 50 or more articles and resources in the library that will best help you. Each resource will have a brief description of what the article is about and contain a link on how to find the article.

UPCOMING EVENTS

THE MID-ATLANTIC EQUITY CENTER

Promoting the Achievement of Culturally Diverse Young Males

Washington D.C., March 24, 2006

<http://www.maec.org/conference2006.html>

THE NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

26th Annual Excellence in Education Conference: Making Equity Work- Engaging All Students for High Achievement

Lincoln, Nebraska, March 29-30, 2006

<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/cspd/Conference/index.htm>

THE 2006 CONFERENCE FOR THE RELEVANCE OF ASSESSMENT AND CULTURE IN EDUCATION (R.A.C.E. 2006)

Indigenous Issues and Voices in Educational Research and Assessment

Tempe, Arizona, April 27-29, 2006

<http://coe.asu.edu/ivera>

NIUSI'S SYNERGY SITE MEETING

Washington D.C., May 3-5, 2006

www.urbanschools.org

THE CENTER IS HOSTING

NCUST's First Annual Symposium: Lessons from High-Performing Urban Schools and Districts

San Diego- Mission Valley, May 5- 6, 2006,

<http://edweb.sdsu.edu/ncust/events/symposium.html>

THE 2006 CHINA-U.S. EDUCATION LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Beijing, People's Republic of China, June 27-30, 2006

www.globalinteractions.org

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