

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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A study of the availability and effectiveness of cultural competency training for teachers in California schools was authorized by AB 54 in 2003. The study was required based on the findings of the state legislature that: “(a) California’s educational system continues to fail to meet the needs of its diverse pupil population; and (b) There is no system of accountability that ensures that teacher training in cultural differences and customs is available or effective” (AB 54, Chapter 817, p. 95). Through AB54, the legislature required the Commission on Teacher Credentialing, in consultation with the State Department of Education, to contract with an independent evaluator to conduct a study of the availability and effectiveness of cultural competency training for teachers and administrators. ROCKMAN *ET AL* (REA) and WestEd were contracted by the California Commission for Teacher Credentialing to conduct a study of cultural competency training provided to teachers and administrators in ten culturally diverse California school districts reflecting the demography and geography of California.

The intent of the study was to explore training programs for teachers that address their need to be *culturally* competent—to go beyond competence in addressing students’ English language learning needs alone. The term, cultural competence (or “cultural proficiency” as is sometimes used), refers to a teacher’s ability to respond to differences positively and interact effectively with students from a variety of backgrounds. This is often elaborated as the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills to interact with and support the development of students from all backgrounds. For this study, the cultural competence of a school was also considered.

### Limitations of the Study

It is essential that anyone reviewing the conclusions of the study or considering its findings understand the limitations of a study that is focused on only ten school sites in a state with as many schools as California and with as much diversity—even though the sites were carefully sampled according to specified criteria. This study should in some respects be considered exploratory. It provides some very rich information regarding the state of professional development in cultural competency for teachers in California, but it is not possible to generalize beyond these sites and the interviews we conducted with site personnel as well as with service providers who work with schools to develop their cultural competence.

Another important consideration that limits the conclusions to be drawn from this study relates to the changing structure for preparing and credentialing teachers in California. While all teachers and administrators who complete preparation programs in California receive training in aspects of cultural competency, how and when such training is received currently differs depending on whether the teacher or administrator is new to the profession, a veteran of some years, or one who is nearing retirement. It is important to note that a new set of standards and requirements has recently been established in California, and since many aspects of this new system have only been recently applied, the data from this study do not reflect, for the most part, the effects of the new system.

Some of the changes in the credentialing structure relate specifically to the requirements for training in aspects of cultural competence. The relatively recent implementation of SB2042 standards applied to teacher preparation programs means that there are few teachers in the system who would have completed a program solely under SB2042 by the 2004-05 school year when the study was conducted. Similarly, the CLAD-based system of training—a system designed to address certain aspects of cultural competence—is being phased out and replaced by a new set of requirements referred to as CTEL. Many comments made by teachers and administrators focused on their knowledge of or experience with CLAD.

## Responses to Questions Raised in AB 54

AB54 required the collection of data in ten sites to document the following: student and teacher demographics, teacher experience, and training and the availability of training for teachers and administrators. It further required the collection of information about hiring practices, school plans and commitments related to cultural competency, the effectiveness of cultural competency training programs, as well as the responsiveness of each school to its community with regard to developing cultural competency training programs. These data were to be related to a school's API score and pupil performance. The overall goal of the study was to provide answers to the following questions based on findings related to the research questions used to frame the study.

### 1. **How can schools improve access to cultural competency training programs for teachers and administrators who attend teacher credentialing programs and professional development programs?**

Access to training was considered from three perspectives: 1) to what degree it is available for teachers and administrators at varying levels in their careers; 2) whether teachers and administrators have the ability to take advantage of training that is available; and 3) the quality or appropriateness of the available training for the needs of educators.

For teachers and administrators who have recently completed preparation programs or are new inductees, researchers found that what they obtain in terms of cultural competency in university programs still varies widely. Some teachers and administrators indicated that they had gotten some very good information regarding the needs of diverse populations; others felt that training they received that focused on aspects of cultural competence did not prepare them at all. To some extent, this must be considered in light of the transitional period in which this study was conducted, i.e., as noted above, very few teachers have entered the school system who have completed an entire program under SB2042 and AB1059. How well prepared teachers under this new system will be remains to be seen and is recommended as a follow-up to this study.

The question of what training is available to teachers and administrators at varying levels in their careers also resulted in a mixed—and sometimes confused—picture. When asked what kind of training is available to teachers and administrators, respondents often mentioned CLAD or BTSA (Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment) training. These responses did not provide information that is particularly useful to the overall question of the study in that CLAD is being phased out, and BTSA is only intended for beginning teachers. Schools with respondents that told us that they require CLAD training for any teacher they hire or mention it as a primary source of training were talking about a program that will no longer be available. Administrators that told us that BTSA is the primary program of training available for their teaching staff were really talking about only a small percentage of their teachers (although we have some information that teachers well beyond their first year were also participating in BTSA training).

In most cases, for teachers who have been teaching for three years or more, training that ranges from superficial presentations on multiculturalism to rigorous experiences designed to develop an understanding of issues related to racism, power dynamics, and poverty has been made available on an uneven basis to teachers and administrators. Much of this training is available from external providers; some is also provided within the district or by the school. When it is provided, it is most often on a voluntary basis, so teachers with more years of experience would not receive training unless they chose to do so.

Whether teachers, administrators, parents, or others within a school community can take advantage of professional development opportunities depends on many factors. These include the availability of training; competing mandates for curriculum, instruction, and professional development; demands on available time; resources, and school priorities. These factors are detailed in the Findings section of the report under Availability of Training.

Finally, in considering the availability of (or access to) training, we paid attention to the quality or appropriateness of training. Quality was explicated in a framework of “core cultural competencies”—key characteristics or features that contribute to a school’s cultural competence. This framework was developed from a review of related literature as well as interviews with key informants and was used to guide our research.

## Recommendations

In response to the question about *how to improve access*, the research team suggests that a number of steps need to be taken at various levels of the educational system. Clearly, an important first step has been taken: There is currently a set of credentialing and induction requirements at the state level to help ensure that teachers receive appropriate training in cultural competency as part of their pre-service and induction programs. This is part of a relatively new structure that is being implemented in California. This structure, it should be noted, must include strategies for ensuring the competency of those who come to teach in California from other states or other countries.

- *Conduct follow-up study on effectiveness of new credentialing and induction system for developing adequate cultural competence of teachers and administrators in California. There needs to be a system of accountability that will ensure that cultural competency training is available and effective for teachers and administrators at varying points in their careers.*

Beyond the components that address the learning needs of pre-service and newly-inducted teachers, there must be training components that address the learning needs of teachers and administrators who have been working in the educational system for some time. This group may or may not have had appropriate training during their preparation programs; it may or may not have been made available in their school or district; and they may or may not have taken advantage of it. Our research shows that the majority of this group has not had cultural competency training that is appropriate for their local needs, that reflects what is known about high-quality and effective training on this topic, or that reflects the literature on effective professional development. Addressing this need may require the development of policies or guidelines to help ensure that this will happen for teachers across the state.

- *Establish policies that ensure that California’s Learning to Teach System addresses the need for teachers who have been in the system beyond three years and teachers who come from outside California receive adequate training in cultural competence. Schools and districts must recognize the differential learning needs of their staff.*

A response to the question about improving access must also include suggestions for what schools and districts need to do. Schools must place a priority on ensuring the cultural competence of their teachers. It must be part of their school and professional development plans, elaborated with specific strategies and timelines. They must also consider how to refine their infrastructure to ensure that all aspects of the schools—policies, school and classroom practices, professional development, community interactions, and so on—are enhanced in ways that will support the cultural competence of the school. Accomplishing this may necessitate the formation of an *ad hoc* leadership committee, meetings with parental advisory committees and with district and state consultants, the conduct of a self-assessment of their needs and current practices, and so on. As part of this, schools should conduct research to learn as much as possible about resources and programs available that would best meet their needs. All of this is very much like any other school reform process, detailed richly in the school reform literature along with a multitude of

resources to support such efforts. These processes involve conducting a local needs assessment as well as research on available programs or support structures.

School and district administrators need to determine how to provide the support necessary or find the resources to support the steps that need to be taken as outlined through their needs assessment process and suggested by the leadership team. It would be very helpful if a compilation of state resources and programs in the area of cultural competence could be developed for schools to use in pursuing this goal. Beyond these steps, however, schools and districts will need to determine how to ensure access —by providing release time, stipends or other compensation, follow-up coaching or mentoring—resources for the long haul. Providing meaningful access to training cannot be seen as one that can be accomplished through one or two professional development sessions. It requires a long-term commitment and the ongoing support of the school and district. This cannot be accomplished without the will to do it.

- *Develop policies or guidelines for schools and districts to follow to ensure the cultural competence of their staff. Emphasis should be placed on assessment of local needs, development of school plans, attention to infrastructure, ensuring access to training, and providing ongoing support.*

## 2. What criteria should be used for cultural competency training programs?

To develop an understanding of what makes cultural competency training programs effective, we reviewed the research literature and related resources and conducted interviews with school personnel in the ten sites as well as with service providers who conduct training throughout the state. Using these methods, we developed and elaborated a Framework of Core Cultural Competencies (Appendix A) that a school should reflect. We believe that any training program should be designed to help school personnel develop these core competencies. Beyond this, we identified criteria from programs that were identified as being effective in helping teachers and administrators develop cultural competence. These are listed under the Recommendations below. In addition, in the course of our research, we identified a number of resources that address the development of “culturally proficient schools.” These are also listed in Appendix A. In addition, extensive information about the availability and effectiveness of such programs is provided in the Findings section of the report.

### Recommendations

- *Criteria for cultural competency training programs should be developed based on a foundation of research on effective professional development generated in the last decade.*

A consideration of criteria for professional development programs for developing the cultural competency of teachers and administrators should first take into account what research has shown about effective professional development in general. A key aspect supported by the research is that professional development should be seen as a process, rather than as an event, and it should be organized to allow teachers to take charge of their own learning (Little, 1997). To the extent possible, a plan for professional development should be based on the specific needs of a school. It should not be left solely in the hands of local schools, however. Limited funds, time, and expertise leave gaps that can be filled by districts, states, and other entities (Hassel, 1999). A school should have a clear plan for professional development aligned with the school’s long-term plan and designed to ensure that teacher performance supports the learning of all students. Further, effective professional development should support continuous staff learning and be part of the everyday life of schools. Of relevance to this discussion of effective professional development is a document produced by the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning describing its Professional Development Reform Initiative. It specifies the following design elements for high quality professional

development. While this list highlights only a subset from the document, they are presented here to illustrate some of the critical features (in this case “design elements” of professional development for teachers and administrators that should be taken into consideration when planning cultural competency training.

In planning effective professional development on cultural competence, educators should:

- ▶ Use data about student learning, together with knowledge about students’ learning styles, background, and culture to determine the focus for professional development strategies.
- ▶ Provide time for professional learning to occur in a meaningful manner.
- ▶ Respect and encourage leadership development of classroom teachers.
- ▶ Provide for and promote the use of continuous inquiry and reflection.
- ▶ Create broad-based support of professional development from all sectors of the organization and community through reciprocal processes for providing information and soliciting feedback.

The foregoing discussion presents conclusions from only a few of the numerous reports and documents produced over the last decade on effective professional development. Criteria for cultural competency training programs should also draw from the literature on cultural competency and cultural proficiency available in a number resources in the field of education as well as ones from psychology, mental health, counseling, and health care.

Resources that the research team discovered in the course of this study could be used along with others to specify the criteria for professional development programs focused on cultural competence. We relied on a number of them in our work on this study. Many of the criteria are reflected in the Framework used to guide our research (Appendix A). This Framework specifies competencies that should be reflected in schools and teachers, but they can also be used as points of reference for competencies that a training program should address.

A preliminary set of criteria drawn from the findings of this study specify that professional development programs for developing cultural competence should:

- ▶ Address the infrastructure of the school in addition to the cultural competency of teachers and administrators; provide information and assistance to address the issue systemically.
- ▶ Address issues of diversity and equity that includes an examination of those related to race, class, and power structures.
- ▶ Include the examination of participants’ own cultures and the culture of their school.
- ▶ Suggest ways to use “experiential” learning to expand cultural competence.
- ▶ Individualize strategies to meet the needs of local sites.
- ▶ Address ways to structure school and district support for the process of becoming a culturally proficient school. This should include opportunities for ongoing reflection and professional dialogue around the issues of cultural competence.
- ▶ Suggest or demonstrate strategies that teachers and administrators can put to immediate use in the school or the classroom; include specific ideas for curriculum, instruction, and assessment.
- ▶ Promote professional learning that deepens understanding about the culture of the community and how to best meet their needs.
- ▶ Provide specific assistance on how to interact with parents and the community.
- ▶ Provide information on how to use various approaches to assessment and to use data to make instructional decisions that will enhance the learning of all students.
- ▶ Suggest alternative strategies for ongoing support and follow-up within the school.

- ▶ Use an approach that builds the awareness and competence of all levels of leadership specialists, principals and assistant principals, superintendents, and school boards—at appropriate points in time during the professional development sequence.

**3. What additional studies are necessary to provide information about types of cultural competency training programs to increase student academic performance?**

The study described in this report as required by AB54 should, of necessity, be considered exploratory. The small number of sites included made it unlikely that we would be able to find significant relationships between school practices and API rankings or pupil performance in individual sites. It also restricted the generalizability of findings. However, through our work, we were able to gain a general understanding of the availability of training programs, school and district needs for training, and features of effective programs. This represents only a beginning in understanding the capacity the California's teachers and administrators for meeting the learning needs of the state's diverse student population. Clearly, additional research needs to be conducted.

**Recommendations**

- *Sponsor a study of implementation of the new structure for preparing and credentialing teachers in California as it relates to the development of cultural competence, i.e., how it is being interpreted and implemented in the coursework of California universities and through BTSA Induction programs.*
- *Conduct a study that examines the effectiveness of the new structure (under SB2042 and BTSA) for preparing teachers and administrators in the area of cultural competence, i.e., the impact of the preparation strategies on school practices, teachers' classroom practices, on student learning, and on interactions with communities.*
- *Conduct a follow-up study to the one reported here that would examine cultural competence training opportunities available to teachers and administrators who were prepared prior to SB2042 and BTSA, i.e., those who are considered to be veteran teachers, and those who have come from outside California to join the teaching force.*

The new standards and the BTSA Induction program include aspects of cultural competence, but there is much to be learned about how these aspects are addressed either in teacher preparation programs or in induction programs. Since those aspects are embedded within the structure and not identified using the term, "cultural competence," they are open to the interpretation of program designers, and instruction may be easily be constrained to issues of English language development. Thus, it will be essential to study the effects of these programs on the development of new teachers' cultural competence and their capacity for responding to differences positively and for interacting effectively with students from a variety of backgrounds. These competencies are not easily identified when observing instructional practices, and they require careful attention.

- *Conduct studies to examine the ability of some high-quality training programs to develop the cultural competence of schools and their personnel. These could include targeted studies that looked at the impact of some high-quality programs or experimental studies that would test the effectiveness of an existing program or a model developed on effective criteria.*

**4. What is a successful cultural competency training program, and how can this pilot program be implemented?**

The identification of a successful program would require more systematic attention to the design and implementation of a program than was possible in this study. It would require in-depth interviews with program designers and review of documentation; data collection procedures that would allow examination of implementation within a number of school sites, and studies of impact—both on school practices and student achievement outcomes. Some of the programs identified have conducted limited research studies, but it was outside the purview of this study to review these reports or the data included in them.

Nevertheless, while we do not think we have sufficient data to identify a successful program, we believe we have learned enough to specify some of the attributes of a model program that one or more of the ones we identified in the course of the study represent. Some of those criteria are presented above in Question 2, are reflected in the Framework provided in Appendix A, and are discussed in detail in the resources we listed in Appendix A. A wealth of information is also available through resources from fields outside of education—medicine, psychology, human resources, and business, for example.

**Recommendations**

- *Sponsor the development of a resource document on cultural competence for California educators that would include a review of the literature—including work that has been ongoing in other fields—as well as guidance for developing culturally competent (or proficient) schools with a compendium of available resources.*
- *Form a task force to support the work described above and to work toward the development of an effective model as well as a strategy for rolling out this program across the state. This could be accomplished in conjunction with additional research studies that would allow a model program (or programs) to be piloted and to demonstrate success before being implemented on a larger scale.*

The information presented in this Executive Summary reflects responses to the specific questions raised in AB54. The legislation required responses, however, to a longer list of research questions related to the availability and effectiveness of cultural competency training. Findings to those research questions are presented in detail in the body of the report.