

DEVELOPING AN INTERVENTION/SUPPORT GROUP MODEL FOR PUBLIC
SCHOOL EDUCATORS: A GROUP FACILITATION TOOLKIT FOR ARCATA
SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOL COUNSELORS

By

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Abstract

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This project's purpose is to provide Arcata School District (ASD) with a toolkit of resources and a set of eight proposed policies aimed to increase cultural humility. ASD may choose to adopt these for the upcoming academic year. Current policies, historical data, and established curricula in Humboldt County are reviewed and policy recommendations are made. .

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Introduction

Cultural competence “refers to a set of congruent attitudes, practices, policies, and structures that come together in a system or agency to enable professionals to work more effectively with members of culturally distinct groups in a manner that values and respects the culture and worldview of those groups” (Hanley, 1999). This definition provided a beginning point to evaluate and compare current policies for schools with in the Arcata School District. Arcata School District’s mission states, “We strive to educate students and to assist them in realizing their full potential as responsible, productive, contributing members of society by providing an educational environment in which students are challenged, excellence is expected and differences are valued” (Arcata School District, n.d.). However, the mission statement does not include cultural competence.

Currently, there is no curriculum or practices that deal with embracing culture or talking about sensitive topics (i.e. race, gender and equality,). Introducing cultural competent policies are currently needed for Arcata School District and all schools in Humboldt County. The need was identified through a review of archived newspaper articles regarding racial incidents in Humboldt County. Recently, the lawsuit by the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California and the National Center for Youth Law revealed allegations that district administrators ignored complaints of racial taunting and bullying and disproportionate discipline of minority students. These allegations reveal the cultural climate in schools without policies that actively support cultural

inclusion. Arcata School District has come across the same complaints of racial taunting, sexually insensitive comments, and the disproportionate discipline of marginalized students in their schools. Arcata School District needs to foster a more diverse, culturally appropriate school atmosphere.

The proposed toolkit is made up of literature, websites, evidence-based practices, and a curriculum from Arlington School District in Virginia, and a set of eight proposed policies that promote inclusivity in learning environments made up of diverse students. This proposed policies in the toolkit are aimed at developing a more culturally competent school district in Humboldt County. Humboldt County is a rural area in Northern California behind the “Redwood Curtain.”(RC) Which by definition is the extreme northwestern corner of California, i.e. the coastal counties of Del Norte, Humboldt, and Mendocino. RC symbolizes the area’s lack of cultural or metropolitan qualities as well as poor transportation access, sparse development, rugged geography, and a weird provincialism among the native locals (definathing.com, 2015).

Thirty-six percent (36%) of Arcata Elementary School’s student population comes from ethnically diverse backgrounds (kidsdata.org, 2013). Enrollment of ethnically diverse students at Arcata Elementary has increased by approximately 13% over the last decade (kidsdata.org, 2013). This project seeks to meet the needs of all Arcata School District students and to provide a constructive way to fill gaps around cultural competence in Arcata School District. The toolkit developed in a partnership with staff from Arcata School District. Arcata School District, which is currently made

up of two schools, Arcata Elementary and Sunny Brae Middle School. For the purposes of this project, only Arcata Elementary School public data were used.

Between 2000 and 2013, Arcata Elementary School experienced an increase of diverse minority populations, from 20% to 36% (Lucile Packard Foundation, 2013). The shift in the student body is driving the need for culturally relevant school policies that are more inclusive of the diverse needs of all students in the district.

Historical Context around Racial Incidents

Humboldt County has a history of racial disparities. There were many Native American massacres and acts of discrimination throughout Humboldt County. For the purpose of this project only certain events will be identified. The first historical event is the 1860 Wiyot Massacre where the Wiyot people were attacked on Indian Island. No public statement provided rationale for the attack; however, acknowledgement that the Wiyot people were a peaceful tribe can be found on the *North Coast Journal* website (Rohde, 2010).

In 1885, Humboldt County officials supported the expulsion of 300 Chinese Americans. This followed the killing of David Kendall, age 56, and a highly respected Eureka councilman. He was on his way to his office after dinner (Carranco, 1961). “The white people of Eureka saw this as an opportunity to expel the much disliked Chinese from Eureka” (Carranco, 1961). There had been rival gang wars between the Chinese gangs in Chinatown in Eureka. The killing of David Kendall elevated the justification of

600 men living in the town of Eureka banishing anyone with Chinese decent from the county immediately (Carranco, 1961). Approximately 310 Chinese immigrants boarded the ships *Humboldt* and *City of Chester* and were extradited to San Francisco for good (Carranco, 1961). Chinese individuals did not return to Humboldt until 1950 (Carranco, 1961).

Events that perpetuate hate and discrimination are not historical events from the past, but also occurring in the present. Recently in 2013, the Ferndale Youth Incorporated and Ferndale High School Booster Club “performed a show that featured black face makeup” (Greenon, 1969). This current event only validates the lack of cultural competence, solidifying the necessity for this proposal. In that same year, “Eureka School District settled a civil rights lawsuit alleging pervasive and systematic discrimination against minority students,” (Greenon, 2015, p. xx). The undercurrent of intentional and unintentional racism as surfaced throughout Humboldt County. This historical context just provided demonstrates that Humboldt County is missing cultural competence; for this county, the lack of cultural competence filters through the school systems and has become part of the local social construct of micro-aggression and white privilege.

Understanding that a social construct is a “concept or practice, which may appear to be natural and obvious to those who accept it, but, in reality is an invention or artifact of a particular culture or society” (Patton and Day-Vines, 2009, pg. 23) this modality of white privilege includes special advantages or benefits of white persons. Advantage, or immunity granted to or enjoyed by white persons beyond the common advantage of all others; an exemption in many particular cases from certain burdens or liabilities. (Clark)

has been perpetuated throughout Humboldt's history. The purpose of this toolkit is to identify the gaps in discussing culture, racial identity, cultural competence, cultural humility, and the elimination of false historical events in California history in a school setting.

These proposed cultural competency policies and toolkits are recommended for implementation throughout Arcata School District. This is an opportunity for Arcata School District to examine deficits and enrich cultural opportunities for all students. This project's targeted audience is Arcata School District and the schools in Humboldt County. Over the last ten years the Humboldt County student population has changed to become more diverse. However, there are limited policies and norms to accommodate these diverse student populations.

The toolkit will be used to assist Arcata School District with examining their cultural climate; and changing for their community and adopt policies that promote diversity, cultural norms, and the reduction of stigma for marginalized populations. A systems theory approach to address the lack of cultural competence school districts having more courageous conversations around culture, and implementing policies and resources to assist in a more cohesive platform where parents can address grievances, teachers can gain support and revise curriculum, and students move away from assimilation and diversity is celebrated. The proposed toolkit is starting point for Arcata School District to create a more inclusive learning environment for all students.

This project aims to shift the culture for Arcata School District. Currently, nothing has been established. However, Arcata School District is working on a hate speech

policy. The District invites parents to go to Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) meetings to voice their opinions about the policies. Arcata School District will adapt some of the proposed policies in the toolkit to create a more concrete position aimed to address cultural sensitivity in their school district and support those students who have been marginalized.

Literature Review

Quality Schooling Framework (QSF)

‘The Quality Schooling Framework (QSF)’ is the California educator’s destination for timely tools and practices to guide effective planning, policy, expenditure, and instructional decisions at all schools and districts (CA Dept. of Education, 2014). The CA Department of Education (2014) supports the quality schooling framework and is described in the following, This framework for public schools uses ten components to enhance students’ learning and thriving; curriculum, assessment, professional learning, resource alignment, culture and climate, teachers, leaders, equity, family and community, and instruction. The QSF is an interrelated element that is research-based and makes up for the universal features as described to promote quality schooling.

QSF supports the instructional core for teachers and leaders through professional learning, helps with budgets, facilities, materials, and personnel supports, brings in the engagement piece for families/caregivers and the wider community in supporting educational efforts. QSF emphasizes on school culture and climate and looks at family and community environment and also explores attitudes, behaviors, and performances of both students and staff. QSF is designed to meet the needs of all students.

The project uses elements from the QSF, with emphasis on family and community, curriculum, culture and climate, and resource alignment. This evidence-based practice would benefit the students of Arcata Elementary. It would allow for

parents and teachers to work together and bring culturally appropriate curriculum and activities into the classroom and home environment.

Hidden Biases

The *Blindspot* explores hidden biases of well-intentioned people. Mahzarin, Banaji and Greenwald (2013) challenge readers to investigate hidden biases they carry into social groups. Mahzarin, Banaji and Greenwald (2013) discuss unconscious bias related to a variety of groups (i.e. age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, social class, sexuality, disability status, or nationality) and they explain that no matter how unprejudiced we try to be, hidden bias still exist. The authors examine a series of assessments about personal bias. The test is called *the Implicit Association Test (IAT)*, designed by coauthor Greenwald, helps readers detect hidden bias. The IAT consists the following categories: race, weapons, weight, age, presidents, Arab-Muslims, gender science, sexuality, skin tone, gender-career, and native. The IAT uses these categories as a framework to review the unconscious bias we all have as people.

How to facilitate difficult conversations regarding race

Courageous Conversations About Race (Author name, year) guides conversations, presents exercises, and offers tools to promote talking about race. The authors (year) argue the importance of talking about the disparity in different racial groups. Educators can be a part of eliminating the gap around racial disparity by holding these types of conversations in class. The authors (year) promote having candid conversations regarding race and acknowledge the uneasiness talking about race. The

chapters filter through why these conversations and demonstrate evidence that supports the importance of listening to others share about racial experiences. *Courageous Conversations* (year) include handouts with information about passion, racial consciousness, and details the four agreements of a courageous conversation.

Additionally the authors (year) discuss the significance of holding discussions about de-centering whiteness, and systematic equality anti-racism transformation. For the purposes of this project, the author sought to create a platform where race could be talked about diplomatically and brought to the forefront of addressing some gaps for Humboldt County through policy revision

Theoretical framework

Contemporary Human Behavior Theory, (Robbins, Chatterjee & Canda, 2006) discusses contemporary human behavior from a social worker perspective. Social workers are an intricate part of schools and are often the medium between families and schools. Theories of assimilation, acculturation, bicultural socialization, and ethnic minority identity are explored. The authors examine the influence of historical context, cultural competence, and contemporary issues on the applications in social work practice. These concepts are significant in the context of developing culturally sensitive schools in the Arcata School District because the theories provide a rationale that helps explain how students with diverse background may fall through the gaps. Implementing culturally competent resolutions for Arcata School District creates an opportunity to bridge the gap around culture for students by diversifying culturally relevant curriculum and policies.

Established Curriculum

Arlington Public Schools adopted cultural Competence Curriculum, Phase III, 2009-2010, over the last several years. It originated from the Arlington School District cultural competency, cultural humility curriculum aimed to bridge gaps in education regarding culture. Virginia creates a dialogue for the rationale and understanding the cultural and cross-cultural competence that should be implemented for all schools. It provides models of cultural competence, awareness to race as a social construct, definitions regarding racism and cultural competency. It illuminates awareness and knowledge in addressing classroom climate as a form of cultural competence. The curriculum provides tools on cultural continuity. Enlisting cultural informants and culturally responsive teaching.

Method

Introduction

Under Arcata School District Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP), Arcata School District institutes a plan prioritizing policies for the conditions of learning for the pupils in their district. The Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) and annual update template shall be used to provide details regarding local educational agencies' (LEAs) actions and expenditures to support pupil outcomes and overall performance pursuant to Education Code sections 52060, 52066, 47605, 47605.5, and 47606.5(LCAP)).

The LCAP template and identified priorities in learning were reviewed. In the template for the year 2014-2015 are lists of state priorities geared to promote comfortable learning climate for students and their parents. The priorities listed in LCAP spell out conditions of learning, course access, pupil outcomes, engagement, pupil engagement, and school climate. However, what is missing within those priorities is the introduction of cultural competence. This study proposes a toolkit to Arcata School District with new priorities to integrate cultural competency at the district level that are aligned the LCAP template against the California Department of Education's current frameworks.

The California Department of Education is currently working under a Quality Schooling Framework (QSF). QSF is the California educator's destination for timely tools and practices to guide effective planning, policy, expenditure, and instructional decisions at all schools and districts (CA Dept. of Education). Under this framework,

public schools look at the ten components to students' learning and thriving, curriculum, assessment, professional learning, resource alignment, culture and climate, teachers, leaders, equity, family and community, and instruction. The QSF is part of the State of California's mandated policy for inclusive education.

Project Design

There were several components of information gathering that informed the project design. Observations and information gathering occurred at meetings at the elementary and middle schools. Fact checking was conducted with the Arcata School District Superintendent. Observations and review of historical documents occurred at Arcata Elementary School in my role as a school social work intern and a family advocate resource intern. Professors from Humboldt State University Social Work and Education departments, along with staff from the HSU Office of Diversity and Inclusion were consulted for expert advice. A review of evidence-based cultural competence curriculum conducted from Arlington School District in Virginia was identified as a model for this project. In addition a review HSU course materials and available resources from the HSU Library on the following subjects were completed: culture, critical race theory, marginalization, and white privilege...

Results

Eight policies were developed and recommended for Arcata School District to implement in order to fill the gaps around being more culturally competent. Arcata School District was supplied with a toolkit on the importance of cultural competence in an elementary education setting. The toolkit includes Arlington School District curriculum, the literature from the Peace Patrol Training, and the No Flex Zone anti-bullying campaign. Following are eight policies that the school district can adopt to help develop respect for diverse groups and increase cultural sensitivity in classrooms.

Policy One

Currently, the enrollment forms available at Arcata School District encompass general demographics about families. My first proposed policy is to incorporate flexible attendance policies that include more diverse cultural practices of families. An example of this would be to add the question “*are there any cultural practices your family observes during the school year?*” Depending on the parents’ answer, the school can work to partner with these families and create alternative scheduling to satisfy the attendance policy that is currently in Arcata School District.

The school district considering these families’ cultural practices The School District allow for the reverence of culture in the school district. We know that families identify with culture by ritual, practices, and norms within their groups. This change informs invites families to be brought into the discussion around what may be considered

as “unexcused absences,” which shows the school’s reverence of unique family cultural practices. We see an example of this in Pennsylvania when families get excused for deer hunting and where the Trinity Unified school district modified their schedule around the Brush Dance for Natives.

Policy Two

The second proposed policy would be to introduce a new food during lunchtime for students. Currently, the lunch menu is standard with American-styled foods. Once a month, students are taught about a different food encompassing the culture that food originates from and being able to eat that food during lunch. An alternative to this would be to have monthly family meetings at the school where families are participating and being introduced to different foods.

Policy Three

My third proposed policy is the establishment of diversity forums and parent grievances link on websites. Currently, at Arcata Elementary, there is a once a month diversity forum. The revision of this diversity forum is to incorporate the entire school district and offer a link where parents can talk about their diverse grievances while having anonymity of interfacing with the school.

Policy Four

My fourth proposed policy is to diversify education curriculum to be more inclusive of diverse cultural practices. Currently, there is nothing at Arcata School District that allows space to discuss cultural practices among diverse groups within the school district. Another important element is identifying and discussing key stakeholders in California history that changed our culture. Such individuals as Cesar Chavez a Californian activist, The Little Rock nine, the Japanese encampments, and Native American Holocaust this cultural practice is the understanding around micro aggression and white privilege. This is a challenge to the school to shake up the master narrative,

which recreates historical facts and dilutes their significance around state history and local history for the families and residents of Humboldt County.

Policy Five

The fifth proposed policy would be to end the fourth grade Mission project. We have eight federally recognized tribes here in Humboldt County and the recreation of Missions under the falsehood it's being taught currently is culturally inappropriate. Building Missions in Humboldt County is similar of building plantations in the Southern United States. This is culturally insensitive to our Native Peoples who still reside in Humboldt County. This change is at the district level as well. Arcata School District has students who are Native American by re-teaching them about their culture in this way is cultural genocide. We also don't want other students to think that the Missions were an appropriate system for Native Americans. It perpetuates the master narrative in California history.

Policy Six

The sixth proposed policy is the implementation of the hate speech policy being currently worked on at Arcata School District.

Policy Seven

The seventh proposed policy would require Arcata School District to work with families who identify as tribal and create a partnership with the tribe and the schools. Under this policy, tribes would be notified of families who are met with challenges around culture, education, and family matters. The tribes can work with the school district and help provide cultural appropriate intervention and resources for the families attending Arcata school district.

Policy Eight

An eighth proposed policy contributes to a climate and culture change for Arcata School District. For the elementary school, instituting the Peace Patrol, which helps students get acquainted with one another, develop teamwork, understand where they come from in regards to culture, tradition, and different ideologies, giving and receiving respect, using language carefully. There is an element of self-awareness around what students will like and respect about themselves and their similarities and differences.

Once exploring these topics, students work together to establish behavioral norms, dismantle perceptions, and work together as a team. For the middle school, instituting a program called the “No Flex Zone” an anti-bullying campaign and has similar goals to the elementary school. It creates an environment for grades six through eight, to do some conflict observation, understanding what is conflict or norms that create conflict, and allows for students to have a way to anonymously provide information around bullying and harassment. The goal is to change the culture and climate from the groupthink and reframing a school’s environment to say “not at my school”.

Discussion

Implications to population, problem, or location

For the purpose of this project, I wanted to bring awareness to the policy gaps related to “culture,” “diversity,” and “inclusion” for Arcata School District and surrounding areas. Based on the public dialogue regarding the Black face drama in Fortuna and the lawsuit by the UCLA based out of San Francisco, we are at the right climate to implement change (Greenon, 2013). Talking about culture and getting uncomfortable in order to grow is needed for Arcata School District and Humboldt County. By Arcata School District identifying with different cultures incorporating fun activities, exposure to new academic subject topics, we can widen students’ cultural experiences.

Having the space such as the diversity forum where we can discuss culture, gender, race, mental health, and talk about differences is warranted. In the book *Courageous Conversations* (Author, year)...we know that change is difficult and can be met with resistance when it’s unknown. Engaging parents at the beginning of the school year, having follow up when there is difficult grievances help support the shift for cultural awareness. Changing the depth of knowledge about the history of California and the United States helps to shape children’s awareness of the treatment that happen for minority groups and the ability to overcome adverse environments. The ability to stand and support of a person who is uniquely different from you only serves to strengthen this

community. Understanding Humboldt County is behind the “Redwood Curtain” only magnifies the need for the introduction of cultural competence. The population here in Humboldt County is diverse, yet not talked about in an encompassing manner. Breaking down the ‘iceberg’ of culture, values, and norms is a much-needed intervention now with the climate of racial tension that whispers through Humboldt County.

Relevance to SW research, policy, and practice

Within the social work paradigm, incorporating these policies within Arcata School District would help bring awareness to the community as a whole. Understanding that during elementary and junior high, children are gaining their self-identity and attachment to cultural practices, values, and norms, celebrating diverse groups and acknowledging the maltreatment is a part of social work practice. This also helps families within our communities feel more included in their child’s academic success. It allows these families the availability to attend a public school and have their cultural practices respected. It gives families outside of different ethnic groups an opportunity to learn about different cultures. It breaks down the standard norms for students within Arcata School District. The reduction around “it’s up to me” to resolve these matters are limited because the whole community is involved.

Sustainability Plan

The sustainability plan for these policies need five to ten years for full implementation Suggested evaluation should be conducted in the form of focus groups, interviews and surveys from multiple perspectives. Arcata School District, having the

proper funds to implement new programs and create an atmosphere for more culturally appropriate discussions, is limited.

Ethical Considerations

Talking about race is never easy and the ethical concerns for this project would be the community reaction to a problem that has been a taboo topic within this community for so long.

Limitations

This project was not met without limitations. Acknowledgement of the uneasiness of the community to speak about a taboo topic such as culture is not ignored. The community as a whole may not be ready to “open old wounds” and reinvent new healing processes. The acknowledgement of a needed resolution is not missed either. Arcata School District is implementing a hate speech policy does have a diversity forum and has partnered with educators at Humboldt State as well as interns from the Social Work department to help aid in discovering *what* should be done. Changing the cafeteria food and meeting the dietary needs of the students is also problematic. There is an absence of data that supports or refutes my hypothesis around culture competence or Arcata School District and Humboldt County. In revealing the Arcata School District website, there is nothing about diverse groups within the school’s community or supports for those groups in the school’s community. Because of time, I am not able to implement these policies and observe the reaction of the community.

I am a transplant of Humboldt County and will be leaving the area soon. However, I can say, within the two years that I have lived in Humboldt County and my children have attended schools within Arcata School District, there was nothing implemented to support myself or my child when we were met with racial tension.

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