
Researcher's Perspective

Moving Toward a Culturally Competent Model of Education: Preliminary Results of a Study of Culturally Responsive Teaching in an American Indian Community

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The Purnell Model for Cultural Competence emerged as a framework for organizing clinical assessment for student nurses (Purnell, 2002). In an effort to meet the needs of the American Indian population in the Northeast Oklahoma region, Pittsburg State University (PSU) sought to train a cohort of future teacher librarians using a revised model of the Purnell Model for Cultural Competence. At present, PSU's program is focusing on embedding the revised model with an American Indian audience. This study shares preliminary results of an ongoing research study. As data return from students, educational planners embedding the model into university curriculum are beginning to understand its benefits for all involved.

Introduction

It was around Thanksgiving and it was story time. After reading a book the librarian followed up by saying, "Did you know that the Pilgrims would have starved to death if the Native Americans hadn't brought them food and taught them how to plant and grow crops?" The children shook their heads back and forth that they didn't know this. About that time, one little Native American boy jumped up and said, "We're the heroes! We're the heroes!"

Every child needs to know that his or her personal culture is valued. A critical element of education is Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) that is grounded in the principle that culture influences the way students learn. This pedagogy acknowledges and affirms students' cultures as assets in curriculum development and classroom instruction (Gay, 2010; Hollins, 2011; Nieto, 2010). CRT takes the perceived stigma of shame away from culturally diverse students, and teaches them to be proud of their ethnic identities and backgrounds (Gay, 2010). CRT results in academic achievement because teaching content is given relevance through cultural context (Gollnick & Chin, 2013).

CRT distinguishes between curriculum 'infusion' and curriculum 'transformation'. Curriculum infusion occurs when an isolated lesson or unit of study is added to the curriculum. For instance a single lesson about female explorers added to social studies curriculum. The single lesson is viewed as a token response, or after-thought (Morey & Kitano, 1997). Transformation, on the other hand, weaves culture throughout the curriculum, making the content culturally meaningful at all levels. When teachers transform, curriculum and instruction

paradigm shifts occur and the students view course content from a variety of different perspectives (Banks, 2014).

In this early case study, The Purnell Model for Cultural Competence (Purnell, 2002) was chosen as the basis for transforming library media curriculum into a CRT curriculum and pedagogy. Results shared in this study are preliminary and based on an ongoing research study. The Purnell Model began as an assessment tool for preservice nurses and has since transformed into a model meant to help health care professionals consciously adapt their practices in a culturally consistent manner, assuring better care for their patients. The Purnell Model follows nineteen major assumptions regarding important concepts of cultural awareness, including: "One culture is not better than another culture; they are just different (Purnell, 2002 pg. 193)." Each assumption is broad in perspective, promoting awareness of the broad picture of cultural awareness.

Not only is cultural awareness vital in health care professions, but it is also just as critical in educational professions. According to the U.S. National Center for Education Statistics, enrollment of white students in preschool to grade 12 decreased from 28.7 million to 25.6 million from 2001-2011. Hispanic enrolment increased from 17 to 24 percent of the total public school population, and Asian/Pacific Islander showed a 1 percent increase (Kena et al., 2014). As the cultural landscape of American classrooms change, educators have a responsibility to meet the needs of all students by embracing culturally competent teaching models.

Cultural Competence Project: American Indian Focus

Since teacher librarians serve at the core of the school curriculum, one way to create culturally competent educators is to educate teacher librarians to address diversity differently. Professionally-trained teacher librarians act not only as facilitators in developing student literacy skills, but also serve as embedded instructional leaders for the training and support of other educators (Lance, 2001). When they possess the knowledge necessary to effectively address diversity needs through curricular transformation (i.e., developing curriculum through the lens of culture, not simply content) teacher librarians can serve as a catalyst for change throughout the system. Learning to address diversity differently requires all educators to teach within the context of traditions and language of the cultural community. Training teacher librarians to lead this endeavour facilitates a mind-shift in approach along with an adjustment in educational practices (Demmert & Towner, 2003).

In order to reverse negative statistics tied to American Indian education, intervention is critical. American Indian students have a dropout rate twice the national average; the highest dropout rate of any United States ethnic or racial group (Faircloth & Tippeconnic, 2009). American Indians graduate from high school at a rate of 68%, compared with the national average of 81% (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Statistically, only 12% of American Indians have bachelor's degrees, compared with 31% of the U.S. population (NIEA, 2012), and the poverty rate of American Indians is almost twice that of non-Natives (Macartney, Bishaw, & Fontenot, 2013). Educators have a responsibility to help reverse these negative trends.

Giving students a link to their culture is one possible way to keep them in school. Incorporating culture into the curriculum can give American Indian students a sense of pride in their education. Taking time to build culture into the curriculum sends a message that who they are and where they come from is important (Schencker, 2008), especially since American Indian students highly value their native culture. Yet even with a growing emphasis on cultural competence in education, American Indian children are still grossly underserved (Robinson-Zañartu et al. 2001).

Broader implementation of CRT has promising implications for the improvement of education and academic performance among American Indian students (Castagno & Brayboy,

2008). In an effort to facilitate a shift in practice and transformation of curriculum to meet the needs of the American Indian population in the Northeast Oklahoma region, Pittsburg State University sought to train a cohort of future teacher librarians to use CRT pedagogy.

Embedding the Model

The PSU Educational Technology faculty partnered with nine American Indian tribes, fourteen public school districts and three libraries, and received a United States' Institute for Museums and Library Services (IMLS) Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program grant in 2013. Eight of the nine partner American Indian tribes have a library or library/museum housed in the tribal headquarters, yet none had someone on staff holding a graduate Library Media degree. The partner school districts had an American Indian population ranging from 10% to more than 70% of the total school population. All of these school districts have elementary, middle and high school libraries, but only one teacher librarian for the entire school district serves many of them. Information and results shared here are preliminary and part of an on-going research project.

Within a 60-mile radius of PSU, there are nine tribal headquarters and sixteen school districts with an American Indian population ranging from 10% to more than 50% of the total school population. This project aims to produce library teacher librarians who will have skills to work with teachers and administrators within the partnering districts, helping schools reframe their vision for American Indian students. These future teacher librarians will help ensure local American Indian tribal members have librarians who can serve as advocates, make cultural changes, and maintain an unbiased climate and curricula in public schools and their libraries.

Along with program's coursework, these future teacher librarians will be learning tribal culture first-hand through fieldwork at tribal museums, cultural centres and libraries, along with interaction with tribal members. Furthermore, they are establishing a professional network, and they are taking current technology skills for preserving and locating current and past documents to the tribal libraries/museums. Once networking between school and tribe is established, the natural bridge to share resources will be built. The teacher librarians from this program can transform practice by understanding that change has to occur at both the curriculum's core and at libraries serving American Indians.

Participants

Twenty-five scholars were chosen to take part in the Master's degree in Educational Technology program with an emphasis in Library Media. To be considered as a scholar, applicants had to be American Indian, work in a public school with a high population of American Indian students, or both. In all, the project leaders received 40 applications to fill the 25 available spots. Of the 25 students chosen for participation in this project, eleven were American Indian.

The main goals of this grant were to build skills, benefit diverse constituencies, transform practice, and share knowledge. Through a two-year program, the future teacher librarians are building skills and abilities through course work based on state and national standards. Program implementation of the modified Purnell's Model of Cultural Competency has opened doors for candidates to see benefits in serving diverse constituencies, with a primary focus on the American Indian student.

Procedures

After being accepted into the program, students began the process of completing the Master's Degree program. The first step was an orientation session, attended in-person by all students. Following the orientation session students began taking courses in the Educational Technology Master's degree program, with an emphasis in library media. The program includes thirty-six

hours of coursework, with students taking six hours of credit each semester including summers. Currently, students are beginning their last semester of coursework at the university, which includes a 120 hour practicum experience. During the practicum experience, students in the project cohort will work closely with a licensed teacher librarian, learning the day-to-day business of leading in a school library. Upon graduation in May, 2015, students will begin a year-long mentorship program. The mentorship program will require future teacher librarians in the program to complete continued fieldwork. Fieldwork during the mentorship program will be conducted in tribal libraries, museums, or cultural centres.

Working Toward Cultural Competence

To strengthen the core curriculum of this program, a modified version of The Purnell's Model of Cultural Competence has been embedded. In the model, Purnell (2002) describes a spectrum of competence. At one end of the spectrum are individuals considered unconsciously incompetent. In other words, they don't know that they don't know. The next point on the spectrum includes individuals considered consciously incompetent. These are individuals who know better, but choose not to act on their knowledge. Next are the consciously competent individuals who know about cultural differences and make conscious efforts to act on that knowledge. Finally, at the far end of the spectrum are those known as unconsciously competent. These individuals are so ingrained with cultural awareness that their actions have become an automatic part of their decision making process.

Throughout this program, PSU Educational program leaders have been working to move future teacher librarians from consciously incompetent to unconsciously competent as they educate American Indian children. Helping our future teacher librarians transition to becoming unconsciously competent educators required instructors to transform the regular curriculum from culturally neutral to culturally enriched. Instructors worked together, creating course work imbued with projects requiring students to consciously invest in local American Indian history and culture. Details of how Purnell's competencies were embedded into the curriculum will be shared. We also share details of class projects as samples of the transformed curriculum. Moving individuals along the cultural awareness spectrum requires small steps and careful attention to its major assumptions and has been critical to the success of the program in progress.

As part of the process of embedding Purnell's model into the school library program, PSU Educational program leaders modified the model's nineteen major assumptions to better fit an educational audience. Modifications consisted of changing the term "health care professional" or "caregiver" to "library teacher librarian." PSU Educational program leaders also chose to focus on sixteen of the assumptions, creating its own list of Purnell's Cultural Competencies as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Purnell's Cultural Competencies in teacher librarian education curriculum

Cultural Competencies (As used in Teacher librarian education)	Location in Curriculum (Course focus)
1. All library teacher librarians need similar information about cultural diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Development Advanced Children's/Adolescent Literature
2. All library teacher librarians share the metaparadigm concepts of global society, community, family, and person.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information Retrieval and Transfer Topics in Educational Technology
3. One culture is not better than another culture; they are just different.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practicum in Educational Technology Advanced Children's/Adolescent Literature
4. All cultures share core similarities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure Networking Advanced Children's/Adolescent Literature
5. Differences exist among, between, and within cultures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design & Production of Instructional Materials Methods of Research Practicum in Educational Technology
6. Cultures change slowly over time in a stable society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cataloging and Classification
7. The primary and secondary characteristics of culture determine the degree to which one varies from the dominant culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Development Topics in Educational Technology
8. If students are co-participants in their education and have a choice in education-related goals, plans, and interventions, success outcomes will be improved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational Technology Curriculum Educational Technology Applications Methods of Research
9. Culture has powerful influence on one's interpretation of and responses to learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum Development Design & Production of Instructional Materials Methods of Research
10. Individuals and families belong to several cultural groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design & Production of Instructional Materials Cataloging and classification Advanced Children's/Adolescent Literature
11. Each individual has the right to be respected for his or her uniqueness and cultural heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educational Technology Curriculum Topics in Educational Technology
12. Library teacher librarians need both general and specific cultural information to provide sensitive and culturally competent teaching methods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum Development Topics in Educational Technology Advanced Children's/Young Adult Literature Methods of Research Practicum in Educational Technology
13. Library teacher librarians who can assess, plan, and intervene in a culturally competent manner will improve the learning of their students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curriculum Development Administration of Instructional Systems Methods of Research
14. Learning culture is an ongoing process and develops in a variety of ways but primarily through cultural encounters.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Portfolio Practicum in Educational Technology
15. Prejudices and biases can be minimized with cultural understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professional Development Advanced Children's/Adolescent Literature Topics in Educational Technology
16. To be effective, education must reflect the unique understanding of the values, beliefs, attitudes, lifeways, and worldview of diverse populations and individual acculturation patterns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cataloging and Classification Topics in Educational Technology

Each of these competencies was then mapped onto the curriculum in each course throughout the Master's degree program. To better demonstrate how these cultural competences can aid future teacher librarians in becoming more culturally aware, three of these competencies will be explicated.

Competency #3: One Culture is not Better than Another Culture; They are Just Different

As part of the program, future teacher librarians were required to complete an advanced children's literature course. Table 2 shows titles students were asked to read.

Table 2. American Indian Literature in Advanced Children's/Young Adult Literature

Genre	Book Choice
Picture Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Shi-shi-etko</i> by Nicola I. Campbell • <i>Hungry Johnny</i> by Cheryl Minnema
Poetry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back</i> by Joseph Bruchac • <i>Rising Voices</i> by Arlene Hirschfelder
Folklore: Traditional Fantasy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Trickster: Native American Tales</i> by Matt Dembicki • <i>Two Old Women</i> by Velma Wallis • <i>Little Red Riding Boots</i> by Erin Zwiener
Modern Fantasy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How I Became a Ghost</i> by Tim Tingle
Contemporary Realistic Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rain is Not My Indian Name</i> by Cynthia Leitich-Smith • <i>If I Ever Get Out of Here</i> by Eric Gansworth
Historical Fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The Birchbark House</i> by Louise Erdich • <i>Morning Girl</i> by Michael Dorris
Biography	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Fatty Legs: A True Story</i> by Christy Jordan-Fenton • <i>Buffalo Bird Girl</i> by S.D. Nelson
Informational Books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Rethinking Columbus</i> by Bill Bigelow • <i>Paddle to the Sea</i> by Holling C. Holling
Graphic Novels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Super Indian 1</i> by Arigon Starr

Focusing on literature about and written by American Indians, the instructor worked to provide quality works in each of the seven genres, along with picture book and graphic novel formats. Themes of nature, family, tradition, suffering, pride and more wove through the selected stories. In reflecting on the course and the literature explored, one student commented, *"I actually really did enjoy the Native American books that were assigned this summer - and there were several of 'my choices' from the summer that I cannot get out of my head!"*

By asking students to immerse themselves in the literature of American Indian culture, they began evaluating their personal perspectives concerning what their education had taught concerning American Indians. For instance, students were asked to create a plan for integrating the books they read into their own classroom instruction. After reading *How I Became a Ghost* by Tim Tingle, one student included an exercise asking her own students to examine their personal perspectives about events in the book:

I want the students to respond to the book. I want to know what they would do if they were in Isaac, or Naomi, or Joseph's shoes. I want them to list their favourite character...and explain why that was their [sic] favourite character. I want them to identify what the soldier's perspective and viewpoint towards the Native Americans was and why the soldiers felt that way towards the Indians.

Reading *How I Became a Ghost* caused this student to evaluate their own perspectives and, in turn, ask their students to do the same. Similarly, another student read *Super Indian* by Arigon Starr and commented:

I am not a Native American but there was a lot of inside humor that I had to share with my husband [who is]. The inside jokes ranged from: hanging outside a bingo hall to commodity cheese. They just made me laugh typing this line.

Reading stories embedded in American Indian life helped her gain new insights into experiences her husband, family, and classroom students may have experienced. Encouraging students to read the literature from diverse cultures helps encourage understanding.

Competency #5: Differences Exist Among, Between, and Within Cultures

In the course, Design and Production of Instructional Materials, students learn the basics of video design and editing. Because PSU Educational program leaders wanted to work on understanding that differences exist among, between and within cultures, students were assigned to groups and asked to create a video project focused on one specific element of an assigned tribe. Tribes explored for this project included the Shawnee and Miami. Future teacher librarians made videos on the topics of tribal origins, tribal culture, tribal traditions and tribal personality. To assure quality and accuracy of their projects, students were encouraged to conduct interviews with tribal members and authenticate facts through the tribal libraries and museums.

Upon completion, the projects were shared with each person in the class. The students representing various tribes commented on how interesting it was to see the differences in tribes, especially those so close geographically. Others, not associated with a specific tribe, expressed their appreciation for the project and newly acquired knowledge about what being an American Indian means. These personal statements and reflections demonstrated that the students were beginning to understand that differences exist across all parts of culture.

Competency #9: Culture has Powerful Influence on One's Interpretation of and Responses to Learning

Also in the Design and Production of Instructional Materials course, students were asked to create a lesson that would be presented strictly to an American Indian audience. The lesson was not meant to cover tribal content, but was meant to teach common public school curriculum (i.e. Algebra, science, language arts, etc.) to American Indian children. The focus of the project was to allow students to experience how cultural differences influence the way individuals learn and respond to instruction. At the lesson's conclusion, students were asked to reflect on the process they had completed. Reflection questions included:

- How did you use previous theory and research to help you?
- Did what you've learned this semester change the way you approached this assignment?
- How did specifying your audience change the way you approached teaching the lesson?
- What characteristics of the audience made you take a different approach to the lesson?

Answers to these questions revealed a change in perspective for many of the students. For example,

During this semester, we have learned that many Native American families have been affected by poverty. Children from low income families generally require specific direction and modelling on appropriate social interaction. In addition, they require direct instruction in speaking in a formal register, asking questions, and answering in complete sentences. These specific needs and characteristics shaped the way I planned my lesson.

Another student responded

I did a general search of teaching Native American children. It was interesting to read some of the suggestions for teaching those students...Prior to this course and program I would not have thought to research how to interact with Native American children.

Finally, this student voiced how the project helped improve their vision of American Indian students

To me the most important thing I can give an underprivileged student, is a goal. Several of the students I have do not dream of getting out of their current living conditions or location. If I can get a few of them to see that there is a plan and a way to get more then I will have done my job...Thank you for helping making this program a possibility and increasing Native American awareness.

No longer were these future teacher librarians seeing all their students as a group of like-minded individuals. Instead, they were beginning to understand specific needs of the American Indian student. In turn, realization that everyone has different cultural influences was making them re-examine personal instructional practices.

Through each course in the 36-hour graduate program, students have been exposed to competencies for cultural awareness. After completing coursework at the university, these same future teacher librarians will spend a year working in tribal libraries, tribal museums, and tribal cultural centres, becoming more immersed in American Indian culture in Northeast Oklahoma, further increasing awareness of how culture plays an influential role in student learning. The future teacher librarians will serve at American Indian sites, providing them access to archived resources unavailable elsewhere. Along with working in local tribal libraries and cultural centres, the students will tour American Indian art exhibits, attend cultural events, and be present at one intertribal council meeting. At each step along the way during this summer mentoring program, students will come together as a group to debrief about their experiences.

When the new teacher librarians return to the public school sharing CRT practices with colleagues, the connection to the tribal library/museum will be the bridge to link American Indian students back to their heritage. For some, this bridge could turn into a position in a tribal library or museum. For others it might be assuming responsibilities in their school library. And for others it will be remaining in their public school classroom. The key will be a newfound connection to the tribes and their rich supply of resources. With cooperation from local tribal leaders, tribal centres, and tribal libraries, students who graduate from this program will teach colleagues about the importance of American Indian culture in Northeast Oklahoma. They will accomplish this task by continuing to work with, and for, the tribal libraries, cultural centres, and museums. Referring colleagues to the readily available American Indian heritage in their communities will be a critical step in creating culturally responsive schools in a region rich with citizens of American Indian tribes and nations.

Cultural Competence Project: Moving Forward

At present, PSU's program is focusing on embedding Purnell's Model of Cultural Competence with an American Indian audience. Students in the program are completing their final semester of course work. However, as data come back from students in the program, educational planners are beginning to understand how critical it is to embed the model into the curriculum at the university level. Results of a preliminary evaluation conducted in the spring of 2014 indicated that students involved in the project were already including their learning in current classroom practices (Bauer, 2014). Results were based on an 11 question, self-report survey. Survey questions ranged from "As a result of this program, I have a better understanding of the local Native American tribes, their cultures and histories." to "As a result of this program, I will be prepared to provide professional development in the area of diversity." Seventy percent of students responded. Comparing results of survey responses, along with open-ended comments, the findings indicated students affirming the program's current success at preparing them to be culturally competent and responsive educators of American Indian children. Because the research project is ongoing, results are currently preliminary. In order to better gauge success and assess areas of improvement students will again take the survey, when the program is complete, and results will be compared.

Plans are being made to focus on the growing Hispanic population in the geographic region, using CRT practices and competencies identical to those being used with the American Indian project. Combining data from the two projects will assist PSU Educational program leaders in their process of continual program improvement, with a primary focus on diversity and promotion of cultural competence.

Even though funding for this project will expire, future plans include using Purnell's competencies throughout the regular library media curriculum, as well as creating teacher librarians sensitive to how culture actively influences learning experiences. Along with embedding Purnell's competencies into the curriculum, PSU Educational program leaders will also seek to move our future teacher librarians along the cultural competence spectrum.

As a result of this grant project's anticipated data, PSU Educational program leaders will continue modifying its library media curriculum to embrace the unique abilities of students from all cultures into their libraries, and to see future librarians encourage classroom teachers to do the same using CRT practices. Cultural diversity exists in every classroom and will continue to change. Having a model that helps educators better understand student differences can close achievement gaps, alleviate classroom management issues and reduce negative graduation statistics. Using this framework, teacher librarians can create an environment where all cultures are valued by advocating for unbiased learning climates and balanced curricula in all educational settings.

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Appendix A. Survey of Students Enrolled in the 21st Century Library Alliance Grant Program

1. As a result of this program, I have a better understanding of the local Native American tribes, their cultures, and histories.
 - a. Yes, Daily
 - b. Yes, Once or Twice
 - c. Not Yet
2. The Purnell Competencies helped me gain more empathy for the Native American culture.
 - a. Yes, Daily
 - b. Yes, Once or Twice
 - c. Not Yet
3. As a result of this program, I understand why addressing the specialized needs of patrons is critical.
 - a. Yes, Daily
 - b. Yes, Once or Twice
 - c. Not Yet
4. As a result of this program, I know how to find valuable online resources for schools and tribal entities.
 - a. Yes, Daily
 - b. Yes, Once or Twice
 - c. Not Yet
5. Since entering this program, I am implementing what I learned into my classroom, library, or work setting.
 - a. Yes, Daily
 - b. Yes, Once or Twice
 - c. Not Yet
6. As a result of this program, I plan to collaborate so that documents and materials can be shared with Native American students.
 - a. Yes, Daily
 - b. Yes, Once or Twice
 - c. Not Yet
7. As a result of this program, I will be prepared to provide professional development in the area of diversity.
 - a. Yes, Daily
 - b. Yes, Once or Twice
 - c. Not Yet
8. This program is teaching me how to organize, manage, and preserve materials relevant to Native American heritage.
 - a. Yes, Daily
 - b. Yes, Once or Twice

- c. Not Yet
9. As a result of this program, I can apply the Purnell Competencies to other cultures.
- a. Yes, Daily
 - b. Yes, Once or Twice
 - c. Not Yet
10. I would have enrolled in this program without grant funding.
- a. Yes
 - b. No
11. Please add the most important “Ah-Ha” moment that you’ve had during this program.