Guidelines for

Preparing Culturally Responsive Teachers for Alaska's Schools

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adopted by the

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Preface

The following guidelines address issues of concern in the preparation of teachers who will be expected to teach students from diverse backgrounds in a culturally responsive and educationally healthy way. Special attention is given to the preparation of Native and non-Native teachers for small rural schools in Alaska. The guidelines are presented as they relate to each of the Alaska Teacher Standards, taking into consideration the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools and the Alaska Student Content Standards. It is intended that all teachers in Alaska be prepared in such a way that they are able to demonstrate a high level of proficiency in all of these standards, and that programs preparing educators in Alaska incorporate these guidelines as outcome indicators in their planning and implementation.

The purpose of these guidelines is to offer assistance to personnel associated with teacher education and staff development programs in addressing the special considerations that come into play when seeking to prepare educators who are able to incorporate the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools in their work. Using the Alaska Teacher Standards as a framework, these guidelines provide specific indicators for determining the enhanced knowledge and skills that culturally responsive teachers need above and beyond the performance indicators stipulated by

the State. While each of these indicators should be given explicit attention during the pre-service and inservice preparation of teachers, many of them will benefit as well from continued individual attention throughout a teacher's professional career.

Along with these "guidelines" are a set of "general recommendations" aimed at stipulating the kind of programs and policies that need to be in place if the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools are to achieve the goals for which they are intended. The Alaska Department of Education, universities and school districts are all encouraged to review their policies, programs and practices and to adopt these recommendations wherever possible. By doing so, all of Alaska's children will benefit.

Alaska Teacher Standard

1 Philosophy

Teachers can describe their philosophy of education and demonstrate its relationship to their practice.

Culturally responsive teachers who meet this standard will:

a. develop a philosophy of education that is able to accommodate multiple world views, values and belief systems, including attention to the interconnectedness of the human, natural and spiritual worlds as reflected in Alaska Native societies.

b. incorporate locally appropriate cultural values in all aspects of their teaching, drawing upon the formal statement of values adopted by people in the surrounding region.

c. gain first-hand experience in alternative ways of knowing and learning under the guidance of personnel who are themselves grounded in ways of knowing that are different from those based on a literate tradition (i.e., schooling), including the experientially-based oral tradition of Alaska Native societies.

d. incorporate alternative ways of knowing in their teaching practice and understand the similarities and differences between them, particularly with regard to the intermingling of Alaska Native and Western traditions.

e. demonstrate their understanding of alternative world views in contexts where they can be judged by practitioners of those world views.

Alaska Teacher Standard

2 Learning Theory & Practice

Teachers understand how students learn and develop and apply that knowledge in their practice.

Culturally responsive teachers who meet this standard will:

a. incorporate and build upon the prior knowledge and experiences of the students in their care and reinforce the positive parenting and child-rearing practices from the community in all aspects of their teaching.

b. exhibit a thorough understanding of the role of naturalistic intelligence in indigenous societies and will demonstrate their ability to draw upon multiple forms of intelligence in their teaching practice.

c. acquire and apply a full repertoire of skills for the appropriate use of experiential approaches to learning in their teaching practice.

d. demonstrate the ability to work with mixed-age/grade groupings in their classroom and utilize the range of abilities and experiences in such a situation to instructional advantage.

e. approach the developmental potential of their students in a way that recognizes that all children develop at their own rate and in their own way.

f. engage in extended experiences that involve the development of observation and listening skills associated with the traditional learning ways of Native people.

Alaska Teacher Standard

3 Diversity

Teachers teach students with respect for their individual and cultural characteristics.

Culturally responsive teachers who meet this standard will:

a. acquire and apply the skills needed to learn about the local language(s) and culture(s) of the community in which they are situated.

b. draw upon the traditional teaching roles and practices in the community to enhance the educational experiences of their students.

c. participate in an Elders-in-Residence program and implement such a program in their own school and classroom.

d. understand the significance of the role of cultural identity in providing a strong foundation for all social, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development and demonstrate the ability to build on that understanding in their teaching.

e. acquire a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the local, regional and statewide context in which their students live and be able to pass on that understanding in their teaching, particularly as it relates to the well-being and survival of small societies.

f. help their students to understand and compare different notions of cultural diversity from within and beyond their own community and cultural region, including factors that come into play within culturally mixed and blended families.

g. serve as adult role models by actively contributing to the local lifeways and traditions as practiced in the community in which they teach.

Alaska Teacher Standard

4 Content

Teachers know their content area and how to teach it.

Culturally responsive teachers who meet this standard will:

a. pursue interdisciplinary studies across multiple subject areas that are applicable to the curriculum content they will be called upon to teach as it relates to the real-world context in which their students are situated.

b. demonstrate an extensive repertoire of skills for the application of the content knowledge they teach in guiding students toward the development of local solutions to everyday problems in the world around them.

c. demonstrate the ability to acquire an in-depth understanding of the knowledge system indigenous to the place in which they are teaching and apply that understanding in their practice.

d. demonstrate a recognition that many and various cultural traditions from throughout the world, including Alaska Native, have contributed to the knowledge base reflected in the Alaska Content Standards.

e. demonstrate the ability to align all subject matter with the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools and to develop curriculum models that are based on the local cultural and environmental experiences of their students.

f. recognize the importance of cultural and intellectual property rights in their teaching practice and honor such rights in all aspects of their selection and utilization of curriculum resources.

Alaska Teacher Standard

5

Instruction & Assessment

Teachers facilitate, monitor and assess student learning.

Culturally responsive teachers who meet this standard will:

a. utilize multiple instructional strategies and apply those strategies appropriately and flexibly in response to the cultural and instructional environment in which they are situated.

b. incorporate and build upon locally identified cultural values and beliefs in all aspects of their teaching and assessment practices.

c. construct and teach to alternative curriculum frameworks, including those grounded in Alaska Native world views and knowledge systems.

d. utilize alternative instructional strategies grounded in ways of teaching and learning traditional to the local community and engage community members in helping to assess their effectiveness in achieving student learning.

e. demonstrate the ability to utilize a broad assortment of assessment skills and tools in their teaching that maximize the opportunities for students to demonstrate their competence in a variety of ways applicable to local circumstances, including the involvement of local Elders to pass judgement on knowledge and skills associated with traditional cultural practices.

f. demonstrate a thorough understanding of the cultural implications of standardized and norm-referenced tests and be able to make appropriate decisions regarding their use for educational and accountability purposes.

g. consider all forms of intelligence and problem-solving skills in the assessment of the learning potential of students in their care and provide appropriate opportunities for the educational advancement of all students.

h. possess the skills to utilize technology as a tool to enhance educational opportunities and to facilitate appropriate documentation and communication of local cultural knowledge while honoring cultural and intellectual property rights.

Alaska Teacher Standard

6 Learning Environment

Teachers create and maintain a learning environment in which all students are actively engaged and contributing members.

Culturally responsive teachers who meet this standard will:

a. construct learning environments in the classroom context that are modeled on natural learning environments in the community.

b. effectively utilize the local community as an extension of the classroom learning environment.

c. successfully prepare for, organize and implement extended camps and other seasonal everyday-life experiences to ground student learning naturally in the surrounding environment.

d. utilize natural structures and models to construct learning environments that are compatible with the cultural and ecological context in which students are situated.

Alaska Teacher Standard

7

Family & Community Involvement

Teachers work as partners with parents, families and with the community.

Culturally responsive teachers who meet this standard will:

a. effectively identify and utilize the resources and expertise in the surrounding community to enhance the learning opportunities of the students.

b. develop partnerships with parents, Elders, school board members and other community representatives as co-teachers in all aspects of their curricular and instructional planning and implementation, and arrange for appropriate recognition for such contributions.

c. understand the role and responsibility of the school as a significant factor in the social, economic and political make-up of the surrounding community and as a major contributor to the communities health and well-being.

d. assume culturally appropriate and constructive roles in the community in which they teach and respect the roles and contributions of other members of the community.

Alaska Teacher Standard

8 Professional Growth

Teachers participate in and contribute to the teaching profession.

Culturally responsive teachers who meet this standard will:

a. draw upon the regional Native Educator Associations along with state and district resources for their own educational improvement and professional growth.

b. engage in critical self-assessment and participatory research to ascertain the extent to which their teaching practices are effectively grounded in the traditional ways of transmitting the culture of the surrounding community.

c. prepare and maintain a comprehensive portfolio documenting the strengths and weaknesses they bring to their role as a teacher.

d. demonstrate their willingness and ability to contribute to a supportive collegial environment that promotes professional growth of all participants on behalf of the educational and cultural well-being of the students in their care.

e. participate in, contribute to and learn from local community events and activities in culturally appropriate ways.

General Recommendations

1. The Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools should be integrated into all aspects of teacher and administrator preparation programs.
2. All teacher preparation candidates should be provided in-depth experiences in working with students whose cultural backgrounds are different from their own.
3. All new teachers should be provided with a cross-cultural orientation as part of the districts regular inservice program, including where possible, a week-long cultural camp experience and the assignment of an experienced Native teacher/aide, an Elder and a student as mentors throughout the first year of teaching, all of which should be constructed to meet the states "multi-cultural education" requirement for licensure.
4. Teacher preparation programs should provide candidates who wish to consider teaching in rural Alaska (or intend to address cross-cultural issues in urban schools) with extended opportunities to complete an internship in a rural school/community setting.
5. All school districts should provide career ladder incentives for their employees to pursue professional

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development opportunities, as well as a "future teachers" club to attract more local people into careers in education.

6. A "cross-cultural specialist" endorsement based on the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools should be made available through the Alaska DOE and UA for teachers and school districts to utilize where such specialized expertise is needed.

7. To the extent that we teach the way we are taught, university faculty and others associated with the preparation of teachers should participate in cultural immersion experiences themselves to develop the insights and sensitivities they intend to impart to their teacher candidates.

8. Teacher education programs should continue to provide support for graduates through the first year of teaching to assist new teachers in applying their pedagogical knowledge and skills to a real-life teaching situation.

9. Mechanisms, incentives and resources should be made available for school districts to provide paid internships for preservice teacher candidates to assume responsibility for a regular classroom at 60% of a regular teachers salary, with the stipulation that a licensed mentor teacher in the same building be assigned to guide and supervise the intern, utilizing the remaining 40% of the salary.

10. Native educator associations should initiate community forums and cultural orientation programs for parents, school board members and administrators to promote the development of a common agenda for addressing the educational needs of the children in their care based on the Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive Schools, including the standards for culturally supportive communities.

11. All of the above guidelines and recommendations for strengthening the cultural responsiveness of teachers are equally applicable to the preparation and practice of school administrators and thus should serve as a basis for revitalizing all educational leadership programs, including the Native Administrators for Rural Alaska program.

12. Representatives of the Native educator associations throughout the state should be formed into an Alaska Native/Rural Teacher Education Consortium to oversee the implementation of these guidelines at all levels of teacher preparation in Alaska.