

Summary of Recommendations

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that time be allocated for ongoing dialogue and developing each staff member's capacity to confront difficult and often disconcerting questions.

In order to emphasize the connection between cultural responsiveness and academic achievement, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the responsibility for the Cultural Connections initiative be placed under the Chief Academic Officer.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District in collaboration with the community actively seek grants and other sources of funding to ensure the effective and expeditious implementation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning initiative.

Recognizing that cultural responsiveness is essential to academic achievement, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District emphasize and make explicit (in publications, training, etc.) that cultural responsiveness is embedded in all of the Principles of Learning.

Recognizing that cultural responsiveness is an integral part of all campus operations, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District require all campuses to consider the level of cultural responsiveness on the campus when developing Campus Improvement Plans.

Recognizing the importance of supplemental education in closing the achievement gap, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District seriously explore opportunities to develop and encourage supplemental education programs throughout the District.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District continue to seek the guidance of and consult with the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force (or other task force/advisory committee formed to replace the current Task Force) in implementing the overall initiative.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that periodic assessments, surveys, and focus groups be conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Initiative.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND LITERATURE REVIEW SUBCOMMITTEE

Based on the need to close the achievement gap, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District support the requests of the campus-based needs assessment respondents for additional money for teacher planning, tutoring of students, and attending professional development as the District develops the budget for subsequent years.

Based on the need to close the achievement gap, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District contact campuses that requested extra help in analyzing their school data and make arrangements to provide this support. Specifically, the Task Force recommends that Equity Audits (described later) be conducted on those campuses that request support.

Based on the need to close the achievement gap, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District conduct campus-level and district-level needs assessments and surveys in the future to ensure that the efforts of the District remain relevant and responsive to changing needs.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the current Cultural Connections Resources List be shared with all campuses in the District, along with information about the person to contact to review or receive copies of any of the collected literature.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the current Cultural Connections Resources List be made immediately accessible on the District's website, along with information about the person to contact to review or receive copies of any of the collected literature.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that a database of collected literature be developed and made accessible online, including short abstracts.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District's instructional planning resource guides include literature identified as culturally responsive.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that a person (or persons) at AISD central offices be responsible for continuing to collect relevant literature and update the Cultural Connections library and database to ensure that the data available to members of the AISD community is not outdated.

VALUES SUBCOMMITTEE

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that a systemic approach to improving the cultural responsiveness of all AISD employees be developed and that all AISD policies and practices account for and express the reality that AISD is culturally diverse, values that diversity and encourages all stakeholders to understand and build upon the strengths of such diversity.

Based on a disparity in the numbers of children of color in AISD versus the numbers of teachers and other employees of color, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District aggressively recruit and retain Mexican American, African American and other teachers and administrators of color.

Based on the disparity in the number of children of color in AISD versus the number of children of color in GT/AP/Honors classes, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District adopt systems geared to guaranteeing equal access to all AISD students to GT/AP/Honors sections and classes.

Based on AISD data that indicates bias in Special Education placement, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District adopt systemic procedures that guarantee that only those students requiring Special Education are so identified and receive appropriate services.

Based on AISD data that indicates bias in discipline referrals, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District continue to monitor and do more to: (1) ensure that discipline referral procedures are fairly and equitably applied in all schools and across all student subgroups; (2) to identify students at risk of suspension, removal or expulsion and provide opportunities to help them avoid suspension or expulsion; and (3) to ensure that appropriate disciplinary information is communicated to teachers and counselors who have direct contact with disciplined students.

Based on a need for assistance with navigating the system, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District institute a democratically structured ombudsman-type of self-help and grievance procedure to address incidents such as disrespect, harassment, discrimination and bullying for parents, students, teachers and staff at the school and district levels.

PEDAGOGY SUBCOMMITTEE

Based on the fact that AISD is already overloaded with programs and initiatives, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that culturally-responsive pedagogy practices be integrated into the standard operating procedures (such as those connected with the appraisal process) and professional development activities in place throughout the District.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District identify individuals with experience and expertise to assist the District's IPG (Instructional Planning Guides) Review Committee in reviewing the IPG's for cultural responsiveness.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the model lessons developed for each IPG should model culturally responsive pedagogy.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that principals, as part of regularly scheduled meetings with district officials, be given suggestions and materials that they could select from to help teachers in their schools teach in a more culturally responsive way and to assess whether the classroom and school environments are appropriate for serving diverse school populations.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that principals integrate concerns that include culturally responsive pedagogy as an accountable component of the teacher appraisal system.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the portfolio process used to assess the work of principals be altered to include an item that assesses the principal's role as an instructional leader who helps his/her staff teach in more culturally-responsive ways.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District communicate its commitment to culturally responsive pedagogy to textbook publishers and those responsible at the state level for the selection and adoption of the textbooks and, in the future, only purchase those textbooks that reflect this commitment.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that 3 East Austin schools (elementary, middle, and high school) in a vertical team be designated as "professional development schools."

TRAINING SUBCOMMITTEE

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that one three-day “train the trainer” session with NCBI be held for high schools prior to October 31, 2003. Attendees at the “train the trainer” session would include the individuals that previously attended the NCBI training.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the individuals from each campus that attend NCBI training serve as a Core Committee for each of their campuses to develop a campus-specific follow-up plan for teaching others on their campus. The Core Committee should meet once a month with those trained to monitor implementation, address any problems, and lead efforts and sustain momentum for more effective cultural responsiveness on the campus.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that a year-long action plan be developed and implemented by the Core Committee on each campus to strengthen culturally responsive competencies on that campus.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that an evaluation plan be developed that measures attainment of the goals at the end of the “train the trainer” session and at 180-day intervals thereafter for 12 months.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the Chief Academic Officer (or the other District staff person ultimately responsible for the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning initiative) be responsible for creating a process to share and analyze data across campuses to determine results and implications of the Cultural Connections initiative. This information should be shared with other campuses and appropriate staff.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that additional training resources be made available to campuses to meet their specific needs in their long-term follow-up planning; i.e., the UT Diversity Center staff and materials.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that training be made available in the near future to all middle schools and elementary schools throughout the District, and that the process used to deliver training in high schools, with appropriate modifications, be followed in providing training for middle and elementary schools.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH SUBCOMMITTEE

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that a Cultural Connections task force and/or advisory council continue to work with the District and community regarding cultural responsiveness on local campuses and central office. This task force and/or committee should submit a quarterly report to the Superintendent and the Board of Trustees to ensure accountability and sustainability.

Based on the community's positive response to the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Community Forum held in January of 2003, it is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District hold an annual community forum, called the "Vince Bland Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Community Forum," to share its progress in the area of cultural responsiveness; to solicit the feedback and advice of the community; and to provide shared professional development opportunities for faculty, administrators, and the community.

CUSTOMER SERVICE INITIATIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District embrace and support the Administration's current customer service initiative and encourage proactive implementation throughout the District.

It is the recommendation of the Cultural Connections to Teaching and Learning Task Force that the District support the implementation of AISD's parent involvement program.