



State Policy and Practice Portrait

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Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) Students: What Educator Preparation Programs Need to Do to Support Teacher Learning

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The Priority

U. S. schools are becoming more diverse, and the changing complexion of the school population has implications for policy and practice.¹ The National Center for Education Statistics reports that the “minority” student population is projected to be the majority (55%, including multiracial students) by 2025,² although the teaching force remains predominantly White and female.³

Current educational data indicate that culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students—students in the ethnic or language minority—have some of the lowest academic outcomes and graduation rates among student subgroups. For example, according to National Assessment of Educational Program (NAEP) reading scores in 2015, 46% of White students in fourth grade were proficient in reading, while 18% and 21% of Black and Hispanic students (respectively) scored proficient. In mathematics, the results are similar, with 51% of White students in fourth grade scoring proficient, whereas between 19% and 26% of Black, Hispanic, and Native American students scored as proficient. In addition, disproportionate representation of CLD students in special education is a long-standing issue that has been discussed in special education literature for more than 45 years.^{4,5,6,7} Higher suspension and expulsion rates of CLD students result in negative educational outcomes as reflected in the 13.4% graduation gap between White and minority students in 2013.⁸

Supported by more than a decade of literature, culturally relevant pedagogy provides a set of practices that teachers and schools can integrate into their daily instructional programs to improve outcomes for CLD students. Well-implemented, culturally relevant pedagogy^{9,10} and culturally responsive teaching (CRT) allow for a better understanding of individual student needs resulting in fewer children from nonmajority backgrounds inappropriately referred and placed in special education.¹¹ The embedded approaches require educators to be conscious of their own perspectives and biases, have deep knowledge of their students’ cultural backgrounds, establish professional learning communities characterized by multicultural awareness and high expectations, and empower students to become informed citizens with critical thinking skills and informed perspectives. Tiered systems of support (e.g., Response to Intervention [RTI]); Multi-tiered Systems of Support

Preparing Teachers to Reach all Students

Scholars have noted a cultural mismatch and misunderstanding between teachers and students that can lead to increased risk for inappropriate schooling experiences and disproportionate representation of CLD learners in special education. Given the compelling evidence presented, it is clear that we need a teaching force that is both more diverse and better prepared to reach a diverse body of learners.

[MTSS]; Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports [PBIS] and the intentional integration of CRT and evidence-based practices (EBPs), show great promise for improving academic achievement among CLD students.¹²

CEEDAR State Practice Highlight

Through technical assistance to states, the Collaboration for Effective Educator Development, Accountability and Reform Center (CEEDAR) is supporting educator preparation programs across the country to integrate CRT into their teacher education course content and field experiences. CEEDAR technical assistance providers provide research and tools to assist teacher education faculty. Two of the states that have initiated work to strengthen education preparation in CRT, South Dakota and Connecticut, are highlighted here.

South Dakota

The South Dakota Department of Education (SD DOE) has a goal of improving academic outcomes for Native American students who have significantly lower academic achievement and graduation rates compared to non-native students.¹³ To address the focus on Native American students, as well as cultural diversity, the University of South Dakota joined forces with the CEEDAR Center to host a Culturally Responsive Teaching Institute featuring international scholar in the field, Dr. Geneva Gay, University of Washington–Seattle. This free professional development opportunity was open to personnel from universities, SD DOE, and school districts from across the state. Supported by Dr. Donald Easton-Brooks, dean of the School of Education, the University of South Dakota has committed to integrating culturally responsive principles into its education coursework. To achieve broader diversity goals at the university, the School of Education has formed a diversity committee that will provide ongoing opportunities for faculty to learn and lead in this area. The efforts of Dr. Easton-Brooks and the faculty to integrate culturally responsive principles into coursework will better prepare teachers and school leaders to meet the needs of a diverse student body.

Connecticut

The Connecticut CEEDAR State Leadership Team (SLT) identified literacy instruction and culturally responsive pedagogy as priorities for educator preparation reform. To advance this focus, the SLT hosted several statewide professional development institutes for faculty focused on evidence-based strategies in disciplinary literacy, writing, and culturally responsive teaching. The most recent institute highlighted the recently released [Connecticut English Language Proficiency Standards \(CELP\)](#). Dr. Maggie Stevens provided an overview of the standards and the implications for educator preparation. This was followed by a discussion of the research and modeling of CRT practices by Dr. Rollanda O'Connor (University of California–Riverside) and Dr. Michael Orosco (University of Kansas).

In addition to attending these institutes, faculty from educator preparation programs have used [CEEDAR Innovation Configurations](#) to assess and strengthen their programs as highlighted by the following:

- **Central Connecticut State University** reformed the Master of Arts in Teaching program by
 - adding a new course on intensive EL and language-acquisition strategies;

Featured Resource



[Culturally Responsive](#)

[Teaching Innovation Configuration](#)

includes research reviews and program evaluation rubrics for culturally responsive teaching (CRT) content.

State Highlight: Connecticut

“When the experiences of English learners’ cultures and languages receive attention by teachers through CRT, they realize not only that there is richness in these experiences, but also that they can be used to enrich the students’ engagement and literacy development, which is so important to motivation to learn.”
Dr. Angela Lopez-Velasquez,
Southern Connecticut State University (SCSU)

- adding CRT content addressing how to create a productive learning environment for all learners; and
 - requiring the first semester clinical experience include practice-based tutoring experience with English learners, if possible.
- **Southern Connecticut State University** redesigned the special education and elementary education program coursework by
 - including the stages of oral development of second language learners and an observation assignment focused on ELs to a required child development/psychology course;
 - integrating CRT strategies for ELs in a required reading course; and
 - strengthening the Supporting ELs course to include new content on home literacy practices to support English language/literacy development and research-based practices for receptive and productive uses of English in social, school, and academic contexts.

In addition, the Connecticut State Department of Education utilized CEEDAR funding to commission the development of a webinar on CRT and CELP standards to be required of all preservice teacher candidates. The webinars will be made available to all educator preparation institutions starting this fall.

Leveraging the Every Student Succeeds Act

There is growing evidence that CRT enhances—not supplants—the effectiveness of evidence-based practices and interventions. In fact, CRT is critically important in effective teaching. Without thoughtful and deliberate efforts to improve instruction for diverse learners, their outcomes will continue to languish. To reinforce the use of evidence-based practices and CRT to support increasingly diverse student populations, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)¹⁴ makes CLD learners a priority. Specifically, ESSA highlights the following:

- **Support for indigenous and Native American students:** ESSA calls for increased funding and support for indigenous languages and cultures, culturally responsive education, and supports to improve academic outcomes for Native American and indigenous students.
- **Family and community engagement:** Several provisions focus on engaging families, particularly for minority students.
- **Teacher preparation:** State plans must indicate how low-income and minority students in Title I schools are “not served at disproportionate rates by ineffective, out-of-field, or inexperienced teachers.” CRT is a critical aspect of effective instruction. When teachers are prepared to use culturally responsive pedagogy, they are better able to appreciate and leverage the experience of students from diverse backgrounds and make learning relevant.^{15, 16, 17, 18} Through culturally relevant pedagogy and building on students’ knowledge, teachers build positive student–teacher relationships^{19, 20} which can in turn increase academic achievement.²¹
- **Increased focus on English learners:** ESSA calls for increased Title III funding for states and schools to implement and maintain high-quality instruction to ensure English learners (ELs) develop English language proficiency as well as content proficiency. Additional [guidance on Title III](#) was released recently by the U.S. Department of Education and included ways local education agencies may meet

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA): What Are the Implications?

ESSA calls for Promise Neighborhoods (aimed at improving educational outcomes of children in distressed communities) and flexible accountability systems, which have positive implications for CLD students. Additionally, schools are urged to implement a tiered system of support and evidence-based instructional practices that facilitate equitable educational experiences for all students. ESSA also highlights family engagement, teacher and leader preparation, and a focus on increased achievement for indigenous, Native American students and English learners.

their obligation to meaningfully educate ELs. These suggestions include identifying and assessing all potential ELs, including those with a disability, in a timely, valid, and reliable manner; providing language teachers who are well trained; and avoiding unnecessary segregation of ELs.

ESSA's emphasis on diverse students and equity—coupled with increased funding and flexibility—creates ideal conditions to strengthen teacher and leader preparation to serve CLD learners. To support educator preparation faculty in this effort, CEEDAR uses tools and processes to engage preparation programs, state education agencies, and local districts in both policy and practice reform efforts to address this need (see the Featured Resource, "[Culturally Responsive Teaching Innovation Configuration](#)"). Effective and relevant instruction and intervention are key to reducing inappropriate referrals, placement, and underachievement of diverse learners. To that end, teachers should be well prepared to provide high-quality, culturally relevant curricula, instruction, and assessments that meet the needs of all students.

Questions about CEEDAR tools and resources? Please contact the CEEDAR Center at <http://www.ceedar.org>.

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Notes

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