

Transforming Educator Practice Through a Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Pedagogies Rubric: Co-Construction, Implementation, and Reflection

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While the value of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies in education is largely accepted, how to equip educators to integrate these pedagogies in their practice is far less understood. In this chapter, the authors discuss how teacher education faculty's understanding and implementation of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies were strengthened through an iterative and co-constructed process of tenet and rubric development, scaffolded implementation, peer feedback, and collaborative reflection. Drawing from four years of faculty inquiry group work in ongoing professional learning settings, the authors discuss the importance of a localized, evolving central framework which both informed practice and was grounded in praxis. The authors argue for the importance of systematic approaches, including both self-work and engagement with structural inequities, using shared understandings to affect enduring, multi-layered transformation across a large and diverse set of teacher education programs.

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I find it very frustrating to be a student [in the credential program]. Oftentimes, [teacher educators] are not aware of the emotional impact their classes have on their [teacher credential] students. Teacher [educator]s may know their content well, but may not understand power dynamics and gender norms that are replicated among students during whole-class discussions. Teacher [educator]s may be so interested in the subject matter themselves that they do not notice that the students are not engaged in the lesson. Teacher [educator]s may also not realize that the content of their lesson may be triggering to [credential program] students who come from diverse backgrounds. – Michelle, Teacher Credential Candidate

INTRODUCTION

As faculty working within a large and diverse university, we, the authors, recognize the importance of culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995), culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2018), and culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017) for future educators in our teacher preparation programs. However, Michelle’s opening vignette highlights that many program faculty need support to engage in equity-oriented pedagogical practices that center the intersectional-identities and social-emotional wellness of our diverse teacher candidate population. One avenue for pursuing this important work has been through creating communities of practice focused on Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Pedagogies (CRSP)¹ for teacher preparation faculty. In this piece, we discuss an emergent, multiyear process of moving CRSP from the periphery of our teacher preparation programs towards the center of our collective work, with the long-term goal of positioning it at the forefront of the teaching practices of our faculty and future K-12 teachers alike. To that end, we introduce a CRSP rubric as a focal point to inform the program design, curricula, and instruction within our teacher education programs, with the ultimate aim of advancing this work in K-12 settings.

Our CRSP professional learning efforts are supported by a Hispanic Serving Institution Teacher Preparation Grant – the Caminos Project – that aims to both expand the number of Latinx teachers in local schools as well as to ensure that all of our pre-service candidates teach in culturally responsive and sustaining ways. In this article, we discuss one aspect of the Caminos Project – the strengthening of faculty and pre-service teachers’ understandings of and competency in implementing elements of culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogies (CRSP) (Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris & Alim, 2014) through an iterative and collaborative process of CRSP tenet and rubric development, and implementation across multiple contexts.

In Year 1, the Caminos Project engaged interested volunteer faculty across the various credential programs within our college (multiple subject, single subject, education specialist, and dual credential programs) in monthly faculty inquiry group (FIG) meetings. In Year 2, the project shifted to program specific work, engaging all (full-time and part-time) faculty in the Single Subject Credential Program (SSCP) in an initial summit, with the majority of these faculty continuing to participate in ongoing monthly FIG meetings.² Year 3 transitioned to virtual collaborative meeting settings in response to the global pandemic, where we expanded our work to include SSCP student teaching supervisors, and faculty and supervisors in the education specialist (i.e., special education) (EDSP) and multiple subject (MSCP) credential programs. In light of the size and institutional complexity of CSULB’s College of Education, we hope to demonstrate the means for generating programmatic change that is inclusive, organic, incremental and at scale.

Our work was built upon several core components. These components include the importance of developing relationships among faculty, establishing shared understandings and tenets of CRSP that were

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