

## Are We Living This?

### Professional Development The Heart of Change

“A wonderful thing about our beliefs, though, is that they can be changed in the blink of an eye, and that once altered, everything that flows from them changes forever. That's staff development at its very best.”

Dennis Sparks, Executive Director  
National Staff Development Council

- **ASAR** Diversity Collegial Circle: Spring 2006
- **BENTE** March 27 Superintendent's Conference Day: Culture Change Workshop
- **RAP** March 27 Superintendent's Conference Day: Miriam Ehtesham: Linguistic Diversity
- **RTA** Multicultural Education Committee Film Series—March 23 “Listening to Children: A Moral Journey with Robert Coles” School Without Walls @ 4:00 pm. Contact RTA (no fee)
- **RTA** March 27 Superintendent's Conference Day: Leadership Conference with:  
Garrett Duncan: Educating Children of African Descent  
Adam Urbanski: Lessons from Abroad: Educating Children from Other Countries  
Pamela Henderson (Cornell): Multiculturalism: A New Approach to Diversity
- **Rochester Teacher Center** Eric Jensen “Teaching with the Brain in Mind” and “What to Look for in the Brain-based Classroom” - March 28 and March 29 @ Greece Teaching & Learning Center -Contact Susan Goodwin @ RTC. (fee)



### St. John Fisher College

#### February 1—28

Diversity & Artistic Expression-Art Exhibit @ Lavery Library: “Touching our African Roots with Fabric: African-American Heritage Quilts”

#### March 28

Diversity & Literary Expression- 3 *Wimmin in Motion*: A Spoken Word Performance by Reenah Golden, Akua Lezli Hope, & Annett Ramos Wilson Formal Lounge: 7:30-9:00 pm

#### From the Editor:

It is our intention, by publishing the *Diversity Dialogue* seasonally within the RCSD, to promote an exchange of ideas and resources in a positive, safe venue.

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### Suggested Reading for Group Discussions:

- Courageous Conversations About Race*  
by Glenn Singleton & Curtis Linton
- We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*  
by G. R. Howard
- Closing the Achievement Gap*  
by Belinda Williams
- The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African-American Children*  
by G. Ladson-Billings
- Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race*  
by B. D. Tatum
- Fires in the Bathroom: Advice for Teachers from High School Students*  
by Kathleen Cushman

### Books for Kids

**Picture:** *The Colors of Us*-by Karen Katz  
**Chapter:** *Because of Winn Dixie*-by Kate DiCamillo  
**Young Adult:** *The Skin I'm In*-by Sharon Flake  
**Non-fiction:** *All the Colors We Are* (also bilingual)-by Katie Kissinger

### Classroom & Staff Activities You Can Request!

- Grades K-3:** The Hand of Friendship: A Language & Creative Arts Activity
- Grades 4-7:** Friendly or Unfriendly: A Math Activity
- Grades 7-12:** Acceptance and Rejection: A Group Dynamic Activity
- For Staff:** I'm Human Too: A Group Activity

Email your request for complete plan to:  
[Lynne.Hawthorne@rcsdk12.org](mailto:Lynne.Hawthorne@rcsdk12.org)

# Diversity Dialogue

Open Minds—Open Hearts



Issue 1—Race

Winter 2005-2006

## Superintendent's Diversity Initiative: *Valuing Diversity & Inclusiveness*

Dr. Manuel Rivera has made a commitment to promote diversity and inclusiveness in the Rochester City School District with the intention of creating a culture of change within our schools and our organization.

### Survey Says...

The survey results from our November Superintendent's Conference Day diversity activities (employing the film *Music of the Heart*) were overwhelmingly supportive of the Diversity Initiative and the synchronous activities at all schools and Central Office. The common thread in the survey comments and requests indicated a call for leadership as the key to guide the diversity and culture change process.

### Diversity Dialogue...

Michele Hancock, Chief of Diversity & Leadership Development, has launched this newsletter as part of the endeavor to “set a place at the table for each person” to begin networking, exchanging, exploring, sharing, and engaging in “courageous conversations” about diversity topics.

### Issue 1—Race...

Each issue of the *Diversity Dialogue* will focus on a different diversity strand, with this premier issue concentrating on race. “Race is the hardest topic to discuss in society,” says Glenn Singleton in describing how to have courageous conversations about race. “When adults engage in interracial discourse, they become clearer about how they and others are perceived racially. The challenge in society and in schools is creating a space in which my perspective of color can sit beside yours, and allow those perspectives to interact. In race, this courageous interaction is critical.”

### Achievement Gap Essential Question...

There is significant and hard evidence of a racial achievement gap in our schools between students of different skin colors. (Wiggins & McTighe) An essential question emerges: “To what degree does our system have the will, skill, knowledge, and capacity to under-

stand and address issues of race as they relate to existing racial achievement disparities?”

### Walking the Talk...

The Superintendent is promoting culture change through leadership, partnerships, and accountability, as one avenue in moving the Rochester City School District from “mediocrity to excellence.” Diversity has come to mean excellence...what better place to begin the journey then by joining together to Walk the Talk?

Resource: Glenn Singleton

From Michele Hancock, Chief of Diversity & Leadership Development

## Self-Awareness: The First Step to Embracing Diversity

To begin to understand the role of diversity in our District, we must understand our *individual responsibility*. During the month of November (including Superintendent's Conference Day), many employees had the opportunity to share their perceptions, views, and ideas about diversity. By far, the majority of the participants saw this as a first step in opening dialogue about this very critical issue. Survey results (from Superintendent's Conference Day) overwhelmingly highlighted individual and collective responsibility and leadership as the fundamental core elements in re-culturing our school district.

The resounding message was that diversity is easy to support superficially. In order to be successful in advancing cultural and organizational change, we need to consider the role of diversity in our personal development and relationships as it pertains to the workplace and our own lives.

We can display posters depicting value statements. We can attend workshops on diversity. We can hold special cultural events. We can review and analyze data about the student achievement gap. We can talk about inequities in school systems. We can talk about tolerance and its role in our society.

(continued page 2)

## Did You Know?

Hancock, continued from page 1

**But the focus needs to be the way in which we interact with one another as role models for promoting diversity.**

Recently, I had the opportunity to hear several outstanding speakers share their views about the racial achievement gaps and why they exist. The underlying statements were similar in that school districts and the people who work within these systems must **care** enough to examine the role of diversity (race, ethnicity, gender, culture, religion, sexual orientation, language) in their own lives and in their own relationships. Caring can lead to having courageous conversations that ultimately open our minds and hearts. The root of moving organizational change forward is being able to communicate this **caring** through behaviors that model **respect** for diverse ways of being, especially when these ways of being are in conflict with one's own views and perceptions. After all, as human beings, we are all works-in-progress. Self awareness is the key. As we each think about our daily interactions in the workplace and in our personal lives, ponder these questions about race:

- Do I practice **denial**? (*We're just the same; I don't see any differences.*)
- Am I **resistant**? (*We don't have any issues. We get along just fine.*)
- Am I **aware**? (*We do have differences, and I sometimes feel uncomfortable with them. I'd like to learn more.*)
- Do I make **connections**? (*We do have some differences & I've learned a lot about myself and others. We also have things in common. How can we maximize the unique gifts and talents that each of us have and use them for the betterment of all?*)
- Do I consciously work toward **integration** in my workplace? (*We value our differences and have in place policies, structures, and programs that demonstrate commitment. We openly discuss our differences, celebrate what they contribute to our culture, and are clear about what we have in common that contribute to achieving our goals.*)

(References: TLD, Inc.; Glenn Singleton & Curtis Linton)

### What is the RCSD Mission?

- Educate all of our students to high levels of academic achievement and social, emotional, and physical development
- Partner with families, caregivers, and the Rochester

## Introducing the Steering Committee for Diversity, Culture and Organizational Change...

The District has established a Steering Committee to assist in devising and implementing a vision, mission, and five year plan for cultural change within the District. The Committee members are:

- Carolee Albert, PPC
- Marlene Blocker
- Margie Brumfield, RAP
- Jana Carlisle
- Dan DiClimente, BENTE
- Dr. Kim Dyce Faucette
- Susan Goodwin
- Vicki Gouveia, ASAR
- Michele Hancock
- Dr. Frederick Jefferson (UofR)
- Brenda Pacheco-Rivera
- Dr. Manuel Rivera
- Dr. Adam Urbanski, RTA
- Dr. Arthur Walton (SJFC)



Community to provide quality education in positive school environments

- Prepare all of our students to meet or exceed academic standards and to become life-long learners, productive members of the workforce, and responsible, contributing citizens

### What is the RCSD Vision?

The RCSD will be home to exemplary schools, students, and services. Our students will be prepared to meet and exceed academic standards. They will be respected and valued as educated, productive, and self-sufficient members of their families and global society. The District, its schools, and its leaders will be efficient, accountable, and continuously improving.

## Are You Aware?

### Defining Race...

It's just not as simple as "a group having similar characteristics or ancestry", is it? How do we establish a working definition of "race"? In *Courageous Conversations*, Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton propose The Three C's of Identity:

**Corner:** Designates citizenship, either by birth or naturalization

**Culture:** Designates ethnicity which can vary enormously in regard to our daily life of language, ancestry, religion, food, dress, traditions, values, affiliations, and so on

**Color:** Designates color characteristics or race

A working definition of race recognizes that these Three C's of Identity do not function equally in our society...corner and culture are too often racialized, and color ends up defining culture. *Courageous Conversations* offers the following **reflection opportunity**:

Consider these questions:

Racially speaking...

The "me" I see is: \_\_\_\_\_

The "me" you see is: \_\_\_\_\_

The "me" I think you see is: \_\_\_\_\_

Are all of your answers the same? How do they differ? How would others you know, including older students, answer? Did you struggle with your answers?

**How do the answers impact us as educators?**

### What is the Relationship Between Race and Achievement in our Schools?

(excerpt from the MSAN Network News)

#### What Core Beliefs Guide Our Work?

- Eliminating the gaps is not only the right thing to do, but it is essential to ensure the future of our democracy.
- Because achievement is not innately determined, children will achieve when they are effectively taught how to learn.

- All children come to school with a variety of individual strengths; our responsibility is to discover and build upon these strengths.
- Each individual staff member must examine his or her beliefs and change practices to counteract the contemporary and historic impacts of racism and discrimination.

*"The gaps in achievement are not due to racial differences in inability."*

### What Do We Know About the Relationship Between Race and Achievement?

- The causes are complex and include school, community, home and societal factors. <sup>1</sup>
- The gaps in achievement are not due to racial differences in innate ability. <sup>2</sup>
- Schools can have a powerful, positive impact on student achievement.

### What Essential Questions Address the Racial Achievement Gap?

- What is it that educators should know and be able to do to narrow the racial achievement gap?
- How will educators know when they are experiencing success in their efforts to narrow the racial achievement gap?
- What do educators do as they discover what they don't yet know and are not yet able to do to eliminate the racial achievement gap?

### How Will We Eliminate Racial Differences in Achievement?

- Implement, monitor, and evaluate changes in what we do that improves student achievement;
- Develop in teachers, students and administrators the leadership skills and beliefs that are necessary and critical for change;
- Synthesize, interpret and contribute to research that informs practice and that combines the wisdom of researchers and practitioners.

Resources: 1. Nancy Kober; 2. Richard Nisbett