ACTION TEAM RESEARCH REPORT FORM

Name of person(s) conducting research: Thomaysa Glover, Laura Siering; Damon Smith; Brandel Castro; John Garrard

Research Question: What does the research say is effect of Cultural Competency on student achievement?

Sources of Information: Cultural Proficiency Lindsey Randell, Framework for Understanding Poverty Ruby Payne, Courageous Conversations John Singleton, SJUSD STAR achievement data, suspension rates, and drop-out rates

Summary of Findings:

In our preliminary action team meetings, we had discussions around the moral imperative to be a district that is culturally proficient. Five years ago this was a main focus of professional development for administrators. Our group came back to SJUSD mission which begins with the statement that we value diversity. Our district diversity continues to grow as well as the achievement gap for African American, Hispanic, and student of low socio economic status; therefore, we must address the learning needs of our diverse populations with a cultural competent lens. This lens needs to be developed and reexamined on a regular basis.

On the Wiki we have collected data that illustrates the achievement gap, suspension and drop-out rates. In summary, our district does face a significant achievement gap and students of color do not perform as well as their Asian and White counterparts.

Below is the literature that we reviewed and discussed.

Courageous Conversations:

Almost all of the conversations about schools today focus on the need to be more rigorous, to be more accountable, and to close the achievement gap that exists between the US and her international peers, between rich and poor children within the US, and between White and Black students (and other students of color) in this nation. Of those concerns, only the last one seems to deal directly with the question of race. In truth, all of them deal with race—

Framework for Understanding Poverty:

This source addresses various forms of poverty and discusses these issues as it relates to student learning and relationships with adults. It addresses language, hidden rules among social classes,
characteristic of generational poverty, roles models and emotional resources, discipline, and instruction and improving achievement.

Cultural Proficiency:

Culture shapes behaviors, values, and institutions—and everyone is influenced by norms and expectations. To provide equitable education, educators must assess their own culture and learn to manage the dynamics of difference. Four tools help educators work toward cultural proficiency by acquiring the skills and language to engage their students and their families in communities of learning.

Implications for Specific Action Within the District:

District leadership needs to revisit training on cultural proficiency and create an evaluation tool to determine areas that continued professional growth needs to take place in.

District needs to define expectations of staff's level of cultural competency is expected and the steps needed to get there. This needs to include instructional and behavioral methodologies that need to be used and trained for in all school.

District needs to create a plan for ongoing training to ensure new employees and all staff continue the discussion on cultural competency.

"Create a plan to help our students become culturally proficient."
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Name of Person(s) Conducting Research:
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Jeff Banks

Research Question:
What does research show as the most effective methods of communication?

Sources of Information:
Seven Essential Principles of Effective Communication
The Importance of Effective Communication
Principals of Effective Communication
Making Strong Connections
The 7 C's of Effective Communication
Customer Service Tips-Principals of Effective Client Communication
Increase Relevance, Relationships and Results
8th Habit, From Effectiveness to Greatness
The Skillful Leader II
Transformational Leadership
Successful Communication in the Workplace in 7 Easy Steps
We need to Talk, Communication Strategies for Effective Collaboration
Change Management Secrets for Success

Brad Cleveland
CBA
Brenda Hall
Brian Tracy
Ric Phillips
AICPA
Metropolitan Group
Stephen Covey
Alexander Platt
Liontos, Lynn Balster
Peter Murphy
Heidi Hollingsworth
Diana McHardy

Summary of Findings:
Effective communication can be broken down into common characteristics that build trust and collaboration. Our finding show that what is effective with one group is effective with all groups.

There are some qualifiers that affect communication within specific groups:

1. Communication with groups who speak a language other than English need communication in their primary language and the nuances of the English language pose issues related to understanding with these populations.
2. Understanding of culture differences will affect communication and clarification becomes critical with these groups (cultural views of education, SES, etc).

Characteristics and how they are interpreted:

1. Active Listening
   - Understanding views and concerns through clarifying and asking questions
   - Take time before reacting, fighting distractions and avoiding defensiveness
   - Creates others ownership and often brings new solutions to old problems
   - Helps weed out workplace negativity
   - Understanding the issue before speaking, study visual signs as well as verbal
   - Gets information on level of understanding of others.
   - Don't make assumptions others understand

2. Clear Expectations
   - Know what will follow the discussion, recap
   - Commit to keeping people informed, good and bad
   - Communicate progress and objectives
   - Transparency-make sure others know what information you have
   - Keep language concise, don’t say more than is needed
   - Get feedback to make sure messages are understood
   - Relate don’t translate
   - Have individuals repeat what is expected—develops clarity

3. Keep it Simple
   - Use language people understand
   - Get feedback and restate, use visuals when possible to support your presentation
   - Too much information overwhelms and loose audience, dilutes importance of message and information
- Make sure to cover topic and get feedback to make sure all questions and concerns are answered.
- Make sure to use proper words (don’t use language with mixed meanings
- Ask questions that are to the point

4. Lead by Example
- Non verbal needs to match you verbal cues
- Set up systems/policies that support communication and trust
- Setting a tone that ensure effective communication-follow thru with what you say
- Be consistent, predictable and fair
- Control — body language, tone of voice, pace of speech
- Competence — back what you say
- Walk the talk — actions support what you say
- Actions should be expected and appropriate
- Confident — believe what you are presenting
- Calm — builds confidence in what you are presenting

5. Give/get Feedback
- Avoid fear of feedback, keep to the topic and use evidence to support
- Avoid value judgments
- Opinions become realities, deal with observable and measureable facts
- Use of surveys to get feedback to effectiveness
- Use of forums to get opinions and information to help with clarification and answer concerns

6. Use Appropriate Questioning Strategies
- Open-ended questions promote discussion
- Closed-ended questions promote understanding and clarification
- Give think time when questioning, allow time for individuals to digest information (more complex information, more time to digest information)

7. Establish multiple means of communication
- Use appropriate tools depending on situations and circumstances of communication
- Needs of audience.
- Select appropriate person for the communication needed
- Varied deliveries to reach varied parties, make sure person giving information has the skill to be effective
- Know culture affects of the communication
- Use of written communication as a means of records and consistency over time is important

Implications for Specific Action Within the District:

1. Create forums to provide feedback on districts progress/proposals. Get information or provide opportunities to discuss possible changes for all parties involved.

2. Communication needs to be in a language understandable to the individual who is receiving it. This may be in a person’s native language or having the educational, political or legal jargon translated out so that meanings are clear and understandable.

3. Communication needs to be more frequent from all levels. The avenues of communication need to be varied to utilize multiple means. Varied delivery methods will reach varied parties. All communication needs to be done in a current timely manner. Methods include but are not limited to web based information (web sites), printed information and verbal information.

4. When information or programs are presented, we must be able to act upon what we say. Credibility only comes when we can follow thru with what we say and failure to do so breaks down at all levels of communication.