



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION
College of Education

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Oregon Senate Education Committee

Dear Committee Members:

During my more than 30-year career as an educator I have worked with school practitioners in several different capacities to help them understand the need for and develop the knowledge and skills required to make education more equitable and effective for ethnically, racially, culturally, and socially diverse student populations. In my professional community we call these endeavors culturally responsive education, and/or multicultural education I am now continuing and extending this work by serving as a member of the consortium organized by Teaching With Purpose (TWP), and assisting this organization to develop these commitments and related competencies for educators in the state of Oregon. Since SB 204 is consistent with these intentions to promote equitable change in educational systems through culturally responsive practices, I strongly support both the bill and the role that Teaching With Purpose will play in its implementation.

There is a growing body of research and scholarship that dates back many years that indicates when schools and teachers use culturally responsive practices in educating ethnically, racially, socially, and linguistically diverse students they come closer to actualizing both educational equity and excellence. Indicators of these achievements include higher academic performance, stronger self-perceptions, greater adjustments to school regulations, higher rates of school persistence, fewer disciplinary referrals, and more overall satisfaction with the education system for under-achieving, marginalized students. These results are consistent across ethnic groups (such as African, Latino, Native, and Pacific Islander Americans), subjects, and levels of schooling (including college and professional development). Unfortunately, not enough educators are adequately prepared to do genuinely do culturally responsive practices. SB 204, and with the assistance of Teaching With Purpose this incompetence can be corrected (or, at least diminished), and more children from culturally diverse backgrounds and communities will come closer to realizing their personal and intellectual potential.

As we know family participation is of utmost importance in maximizing student achievement at all kinds, including academic achievement, community service,

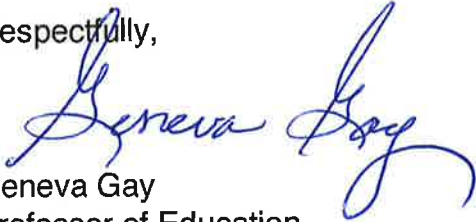
and positive engagement in life. However, the evidence is compelling and persistent that many families of color and poverty are not as empowered and engaged in determining the educational programs and practices their children receive in schools. The need for change is imperative, such that families and school personnel are active partners making decisions that reflect a variety of heritages and experiences of diverse students, and thus, ensuring that educational equity within the context of cultural diversity is not just an idea or a belief but is actualized practice. It is a common belief that the more educators know the students in their care the better they are able to meet their learning needs. What better source of knowledge about children and youth than their own families and community members. Therefore, another essential body of knowledge that will be pursued through the provisions of SB 204, and with the assistance of Teaching With Purpose, is the empowerment and participation of culturally and ethnically diverse parents and community members in educational decision-making, working collaboratively with classroom teachers and school leaders

I have no doubts that most educators have good intentions toward culturally diverse students, and they want to provide them with high quality education. But, I also know from my professional career as a scholar, researcher, and professor with long-term involvement in the preparation of school practitioners that too many of them do not have the knowledge and skills to actualize their good intentions. Consequently, racially, and ethnically, diverse students continue to be disproportionately underserved by schools, and are achieving far below their capacities. I suspect many school practitioners will welcome well-designed, facilitated, and even mandated interventions for developing their capacities to implement high quality culturally responsive education practices. When this happens it is a win-win for all stakeholders, including students, parents, educators, and ultimately employers, community members, and citizens at large. SB 204 and Teaching With Promise have the potential to make this happen.

My professional colleagues (both nationally and internationally) consider me to be an expert on culturally responsive education. My publications, especially *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, are frequently cited as the definitive explanation of its salient attributes. I stand in readiness to share this expertise with Teaching With Purpose and other educators in Organ in their pursuit of educational equity and excellence for their ethnic, racial, and culturally diverse students. While cultural responsive practice is not a panacea for all conceivable educational challenges the record of achievement to data validates the claim that it does make a positive different in student achievement. Doing more of it will produce even more improvements in student performance. Given this the choice should not be whether or not to do culturally responsive education, but how quickly and how extensively. But, as Gary Howard points out, "teachers can't teach what they don't know." And, it may not be realistic to expect

them to know on their own. Instead, like other learners, teachers and school leaders need some guidance and assistance in what and how to learn about culturally diverse students, families, and communities. SB 204 and Teaching With Promise will provide this guidance and assistance, and so will I whenever and wherever I can.

Respectfully,



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GENEVA GAY is Professor of Education at the University of Washington-Seattle where she teaches multicultural education and general curriculum theory. She is the recipient of the Distinguished Scholar Award, presented by the Committee on the Role and Status of Minorities in Educational Research and Development of the American Educational Research Association; the first Multicultural Educator Award presented by the National Association of Multicultural Education; the 2004 W. E. B. Du Bois Distinguished Lecturer Award presented by the Special Interest Group on Research Focus on Black Education of the American Educational Research Association; and the 2006 Mary Anne Raywid Award for Distinguished Scholarship in the Field of Education, presented by the Society of Professors of Education. She is nationally and internationally known for her scholarship in multicultural education, particularly as it relates to curriculum design, staff development, classroom instruction, and intersections of culture, race, ethnicity, teaching, and learning. Her writings include numerous articles and book chapters; the co-editorship of *Expressively Black: The Cultural Basis of Ethnic Identity* (Praeger, 1987); author of *At the Essence of Learning: Multicultural Education* (Kappa Delta Pi, 1994), and *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Practice, & Research* (Teachers College Press, 2000; 2nd edition, 2010); and editor of *Becoming Multicultural Educators: Personal Journey Toward Professional Agency* (Jossey-Bass, 2003). *Culturally Responsive Teaching* received the 2001 Outstanding Writing Award from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). She also is a member of the authorship team of the Scott Foresman Elementary Social Studies Series. International consultations on multicultural education have taken her to Canada, Brazil, Taiwan, Finland, Japan, England, Scotland, Australia, Benin, Italy, New Zealand, and South Korea.