CULTURAL COMPETENCE INSTITUTE

2009 - 2011

Evaluation

Executive Summary

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Background

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) is one of the largest most diverse districts in the United States. Reflecting the wider societal demographic changes, the student population continues to grow with respect to racial/ethnic diversity and socio-economic status. Of the 100,300 students, 49% are students of color, and 63% of students receive free/reduced lunch. There are currently 113 different languages represented by the study body, and slightly over 10% of JCPS students are considered homeless.

In light of the district's longstanding commitment to diversity and the large body of research that has shown that the interpersonal and cultural context of learning has a profound impact on students' motivation and performance, JCPS has set ambitious goals in reshaping the district's culture through the development of systemic building blocks for promoting and practicing cultural competence (*JCPS strategic goal 3: strengthening organizational cultural, strategy 2: Enhancing cultural competency).* Importantly, research on cultural competency in many fields has made it clear that implementation of cultural competence is not a compartmentalized, adjunct activity. It must permeate the entire system in order to have an impact on school climate, students' feelings of belonging, and student achievement

Changing demographics, research on best-practice, and the longstanding achievement gaps speak clearly to the need for the provision of supports and services that will provide teachers with the knowledge and tools to teach all students. Confirming this growing need district-wide, 70% of JCPS teachers reported in a 2011 survey, that "yes" they need more PD on closing achievement gap to teach students more effectively.

The Institute for Cultural Competence

The JCPS department of diversity and equity has partnered with national expert Gary Howard and adopted an approach to ensure the systematic enhancement of cultural competency district-wide. The institute for cultural competence is designed to help schools develop strategies and implement activities to improve school and classroom climate and culture to maximize instruction and student achievement using a "train the trainer" model. The purpose of this model is to ensure that implementation of culturally responsive practices will become institutionalized in the social, academic and disciplinary practices within the school.

An expected outcome of the Institute is strengthening the internal capacity of schools to deliver high-quality PD that is related to inclusion, equity, and excellence. To achieve this outcome, the institute sessions are organized around **Five Phases of engagement, growth, and change**: (1) Tone and Trust, (2) Personal Culture and Personal Journey (3) From Social Dominance to Social Justice, (4) Classroom and Job-Related Implications and Applications and , (5) Systemic Transformation and Planning for Change. Institute participants learn how these five phases of work have actually affected school systems where Howard has worked over the past decade. Howard's training approach covers strategies for culturally relevant/responsive pedagogy through activities that connect to Seven Principles for Culturally Responsive Teaching.

The institute annually requires a four-day commitment to acquire the foundational content by at least three school staff that constitutes the core cultural competence leadership team in each participating school. It is required that a principal or assistant principal serve as a member of the team to ensure administrator support of the cultural competence capacity building activities and PD within their school.   Each leadership team receives the *Leadership Manual for Inclusion, Equity, and Excellence*, which serves as the foundation for building the internal capacity for cultural competence leadership teams to deliver high-quality, long-term, and systemic professional development (PD). The manual provides the PD materials and a four-year

implementation plan to support schools in creating a process that fits their school's culture and specific needs. Once the leadership teams complete the four-day institute, follow up sessions are provided to support the schools as they move through each phase, specifically helping address challenges, analyze disaggregated data, and receive additional technical assistance with Gary Howard.

Evaluation Focus and Objectives

Although several key role groups in the district have attended Professional Development with Gary Howard around the institute (e.g., middle and elementary school principals, resource teachers), the focus of this evaluation report is on the cohort *train the trainer* schools as this is the primary mechanism for building school-wide capacity for sustained cultural competence work within JCPS.

The objectives of the evaluation are three-fold. First, the evaluation is designed to assess the impact of the institute participation on teacher/administrator knowledge and understanding, perceptions and experiences. The second objective of the evaluation the evaluation is to understand implementation dynamics to aid in the identification of successes, barriers and effective strategies. The third objective is to ascertain the impact of the program on student outcomes, specifically student's feelings of connectedness, disciplinary referrals, and academic achievement. The evaluation methodology incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data, and quasi-experimental design for student achievement analysis.

The evaluation is formative in nature as survey results after each institute are provided to the JCPS department of diversity and equity and Gary Howard to help tailor the follow up sessions around participant reactions and needs. Data collected include participant survey data after each institute, school-wide student and teacher survey data collected annually, student disciplinary referral data, and student achievement data.

Participation

A total of 26 JCPS schools have participated in the intensive Train the Trainer institute for Cultural Competence with Gary Howard between 2009 thru spring 2011 organized in 3 cohorts. From a district view, 17% of JCPS schools are currently participating in the work of cultural competence and have a cultural competence leadership teams in their building. The participation rate varies by level, with middle schools having the highest rate of participation (i.e., 50% of JCPS middle schools participate) and the elementary and alternative schools the lowest rate of participation, 5% and 4% respectively).

The participating schools have an average free/reduced lunch rate of 73% and an average minority student population of 51%. However, the schools range from 35% to 89% minority students. Of the 26 participating schools, 65% (17) are schools that have been identified as being in Tier 1, 2, or 3 status with respect to the School Improvement Grants.

Value of Institute for Increasing Knowledge

Institute survey results present the most direct evidence of the impact that the institutes are having on participants' knowledge and understanding of cultural competence. Survey results from every institute session consistently indicate that the participants (a) find the institute to be highly valuable for increasing their understanding with an average of 4.8 on a scale of 1 (very low) to 5

very high scale, and (b) experience substantial, and statistically significant increases in their knowledge of various facets of cultural competence and the implications that culturally responsive practices have on the social, academic and disciplinary practices at the school and classroom level.

Implementation Dynamics

Implementation is designed around specific activities within each of the five phases of the work. Descriptive analysis of the implementation checklists (wherein teams document dates of both completed and planned activities) indicate that on average, 44.6% of the activities conducted with the staff in Cohort 1 schools are around building tone and trust and 28.6% around personal culture and personal journey. There is variation by school with respect to the speed at which they are able to move through the phases, with those that were re-staffed having to essentially "start over" with a faculty. While some teams are still working to build tone and trust, others have moved to applications in each classroom by incorporating the 7 principles for culturally responsive teaching in the administrative walkthrough protocol. Analysis of implementation survey data from the teams and field notes from follow up PD reveal both the challenges and successes the schools are experiencing as they implement activities.

Challenges: The four primary, and interrelated challenges that the leadership teams continue to face include (1) finding the time to actually implement activities with the whole staff as there is now diminished time devoted in the school calendar for teacher professional development, (2) Competing agendas and a myriad of initiatives that increase pressure and scatter efforts, and (3) teacher resistance and belief that "this doesn't apply to me," and (4) the inconsistency of the faculty from year to year due to re-staffing or teacher transfer.

Successes: In spite of the challenges, the cultural competence teams report experiencing substantive successes including (1) significant increases in understanding of culturally responsive issues and practices, (2) strengthening of relationships among staff, (3) increases in honest discussions around sensitive topics, and (4) development of authentic/effective relationships with students. Importantly, some of the trained leaders that left Cohort 1 schools due to re-staffing are now taking the lead in their new school and are participating in Cohorts 2-4, illustrating the district-wide capacity building that is slowly taking place around the institute *train the trainer* model.

Student Outcomes

Analyses of student outcomes were conducted on Cohort 1 schools that met the criteria with respect to number of members trained and activity level of the team. While direct causality between outcomes and participation cannot be determined as there is no random assignment, the results are very promising and reveal that these schools are making greater gains with student connectedness, discipline, and achievement.

Disciplinary Referrals
An analysis of disciplinary referrals found that the participating Cohort 1 schools experienced a decrease in the percent of students receiving disciplinary referrals for disruptive behavior overall,

and an even greater reduction in the percent of minority students and Free/Reduced lunch students receiving disruptive behavior referrals by 3.6% and 3.9% respectively.

Student Achievement

In the analysis of academic achievement and student perceptions, the Cohort 1 schools that met the criteria for full participation and active implementation were compared to similarly situated schools with respect to free/reduced lunch previous achievement as shown in the chart below. Consideration was also given to and level of resources being provided to increase academic achievement as is occurring at the SIG schools.

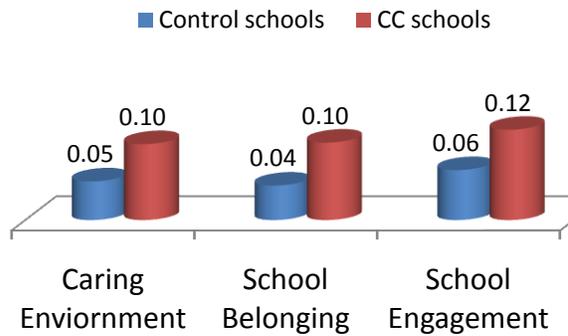| Group	2010 % Free/Reduced Lunch population	2010 % Proficient Reading Black	2010 % Proficient Reading Free/Reduced lunch
Control Schools	79.5	39.2	45.5
Cultural Competence Schools	77.6	35.1	40.3

The analysis shows that the participating cultural competence schools increased proficiency in math and reading for their African-American students, students on Free/Reduced lunch at a statistically significant higher rate than the comparison schools as shown in the figures below:
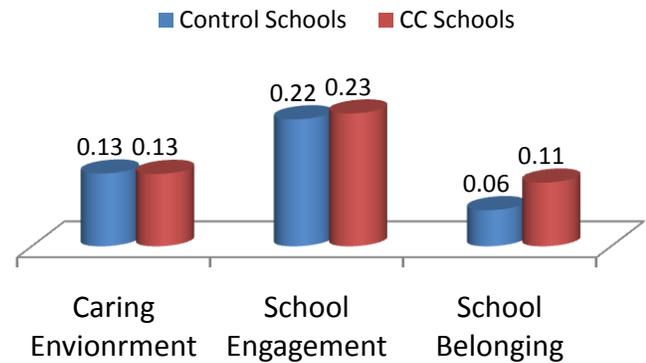
African American: Change 2010 to 2011

Free/Reduced Lunch: Change 2010 to 2011
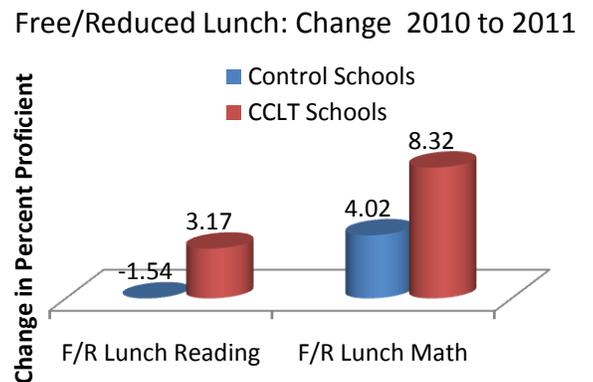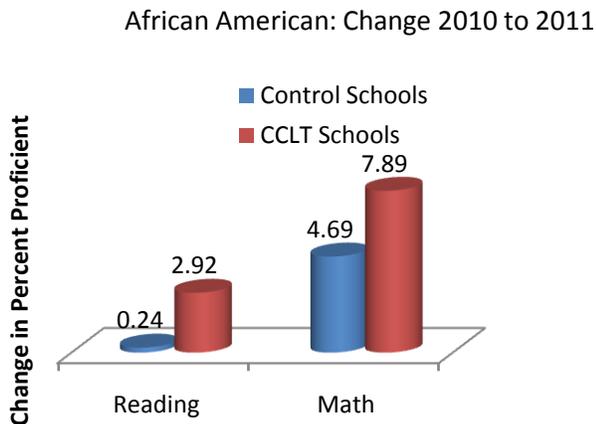
Student Perceptions

An analysis of the district's comprehensive student survey data revealed that the Cohort 1 schools experienced greater gains than the control group on the survey constructs related to their perceptions of (a) caring environment, (b) school engagement, and (c) school belonging for minority students (statistically significant $t=3.435$ $p=0.02$) and students receiving free/reduced lunch (higher but not statistically significant $t=0.32$ $p=0.75$).

African-American Change:2010 to 2011

■ Control schools ■ CC schools

	Caring Enviornment	School Belonging	School Engagement
Control schools	0.05	0.04	0.06
CC schools	0.10	0.10	0.12

Free/Reduced Lunch Change: 2010 to 2011

■ Control Schools ■ CC Schools

	Caring Envionrment	School Engagement	School Belonging
Control Schools	0.13	0.22	0.06
CC Schools	0.13	0.23	0.11

Conclusion & Recommendations

The evaluation results demonstrate that in spite of the challenges encountered, a significant amount of progress is being made by participating schools towards increasing school-wide capacity for cultural competence. Implementation data reveals variation in degrees of development, with the teams on average finding the need to work on building a solid foundation of tone and trust in order to move forward to the proceeding stages of change, while other teams have progressed to focus on classroom applications with each teacher. Student outcome data also reveal promising trends for those schools with active leadership teams that are implementing activities indicating improvements in student connectedness, disciplinary referrals, and student achievement.

Recommendations:
 Based on the results, the following recommendations are suggested to ensure continued progress and development of district-wide capacity for increasing and sustaining cultural competency.

(1) Additional district follow-up and embedded support in each participating school throughout the school year.

(2) Provision of additional time for staff development within the schools, as well as opportunities for the school teams to meet in-between the Institutes to dialogue and share successful strategies to counter common barriers.

(3) Ensure all teams utilize teacher level formative assessment to appraise levels and progress of implementation of the principles for culturally responsive teaching in every classroom level.

(4) Expand training to additional district role groups including substitute teachers, counselors, office support staff, and central office staff.

(5) With respect to evaluation, additional measures to assess implementation dynamics qualitatively should be developed to enable a better understanding of the specific relationships between implementation and outcomes.