



Allegheny County Council

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Legislation Text

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Motion of the Council of Allegheny County urging school districts within Allegheny County to include culturally responsive teaching perspectives in their curriculum as a means of providing students with an additional tool for undertaking the holistic analysis of social, governmental, and private institutions, as well as cultural, economic, and other factors that shape the world in which they live.

Whereas, culturally responsive teaching is a teaching methodology “that empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20).; and

Whereas, the five key components of culturally responsive teaching are (1) developing a knowledge base about cultural diversity, (2) including ethnic and cultural diversity content in the curriculum, (3) demonstrating caring and building learning communities, (4) communicating with ethnically diverse students, and (5) responding to ethnic diversity in the delivery of instruction (Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, Teachers College Press 2000); and

Whereas, culturally responsive teaching in accordance with these core principles allows for teaching context and practical relevance, rather than mere memorization of facts that are divorced from pragmatic relevance; and

Whereas, by way of example, when discussing the U.S. Constitution in class, a culturally responsive teaching method would be to incorporate a discussion of the Emancipation Proclamation, and to have students evaluate the impact of the Constitution on non-whites, discuss why the Emancipation Proclamation was necessary despite the language incorporated into the Constitution, and apply the concepts embodied within the Constitution to consider whether equal rights have in fact been granted and what current statutes may need to be altered or enforced differently in order to further the stated cultural goal of equity; and

Whereas, informative cultural references can be incorporated into essentially any lesson relatively easily and without including any opinion or judgment, for example in a math lesson: “Maya Angelou was a well know author and poet, who published over 30 books in her lifetime. Using rectangles to represent her books, can you organize them into an array? If she began writing a poem at 6:00 pm and finished at 9:00 pm, how long did it take her to write the poem?”; and

Whereas, culturally responsive teaching is entirely in accordance with existing Pennsylvania teaching standards, for example 6th Grade Standard 8.2.6.D requires that teachers explain how conflict and cooperation among groups and organizations have impacted the history and development of Pennsylvania in terms of ethnicity and race, working conditions, immigration, military conflict, and economic stability; and

Whereas, culturally responsive teaching is also in accordance with Pennsylvania standards that apply in early grade school settings, such as 2nd Grade Standard 8.2.2.D, which requires that teachers identify how conflict is impacted by ethnicity and race, working conditions, immigration, military conflict, and economics; and

Whereas, it is the judgment of Council that culturally responsive teaching constitutes a valuable tool for the holistic analysis of social, governmental, and private institutions; and

Whereas, it is further the judgment of Council that it is vitally important to the continued viability of Allegheny County that we continuously strive to fully understand issues of context, equity, and inclusion, and that doing so in an effective fashion requires that we provide our future leaders with every tool available to enable them to comprehensively evaluate the world in which they live;

The Council of the County of Allegheny therefore hereby moves as follows:

Allegheny County Council hereby urges school districts within Allegheny County to include culturally responsive teaching perspectives in their curriculum as a means of providing students with an additional tool for the holistic analysis of social, governmental, and private institutions, as well as cultural, economic, and other factors that shape the world in which they live.