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# Prologue

**W**e chose to open with a prologue because this book combines a narrative and a template for designing and initiating a process of change within a school district guided by clear core values and mission statements. While prologue, introduction, and preface are somewhat interchangeable terms, it is the first-person narrative that makes this book distinctive and, for us, takes on a more literary focus.

For the first-time reader this book describes and applies the Tools of Cultural Proficiency in sufficient detail to fully understand the manner in which the tools are aids in addressing access and achievement issues in our schools. Readers familiar with our work will recognize this book as another application (i.e., “app”) of the Tools of Cultural Proficiency. We hold a value that each of our books be free standing, and The Essential Questions document in the Resources section is for you to explore other titles as “apps” of the Tools of Cultural Proficiency.

A distinguishing characteristic of this book is being the first of the Cultural Proficiency books to present a case story based on a school district’s transformation from unintentionally participating in practices that marginalized students and their communities to being committed, mindful, and successful in making the education of all students a common priority. This book seamlessly aligns diversity, equity, access, and inclusion with the school districts’ primary functions of leadership, assessment practices, instruction, and counseling to support student academic and social success.

The Ventura Unified School District (California) has capitalized on national attention provided by No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and California’s Immediate Intervention Underperforming Schools (IIUSP) initiatives to address academic achievement disparities that exist among demographic groups of students. Rather than resist change or take a compliance approach to respond to NCLB and IIUSP, the Ventura Unified School District (VUSD) began a two-tiered

self-examination process—the district as an organization and themselves as educators. Their focus was to redesign approaches to educating all children and youth to high levels.

What occurred in VUSD was not a slick, new, externally developed and imposed program. Rather, the district began to address, dismantle, and craft new organizational policies and practices as well as educator values and behaviors to embrace healthy assumptions and beliefs about students. The emergent policies and practices of the school and, concomitantly, the values and beliefs of the educators are grounded in the belief that VUSD students are capable of high academic achievement and that VUSD educators are capable of teaching and leading students to academic and social success.

Cultural Proficiency is an approach focusing on diversity, equity, access, and inclusion and is used by school districts and university preparation programs across the United States and Canada. Culturally proficient learning is distinguished from other diversity and equity approaches in that it is anchored in the belief that a person must clearly understand one's own assumptions, beliefs, and values about people and cultures different from one's self in order to be effective in cross-cultural settings. As such, we focus on important aspects of schooling, such as leadership, instruction, coaching, learning communities, and counseling. We are devoted to contextual issues of poverty, sexual orientation and identity, language acquisition, ableness, and systemic change.

Cultural Proficiency is based in the notion that personal and organizational learning is an *Inside-Out* process (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). This book is designed for use as a road map to guide individual and organizational learning based on real-life school experiences not unlike those in your school or district. The Resource section of the book provides opportunities for guided book study by individuals and by learning communities of educators approaching desired change in a systematic manner.

## **Look Fors**

When reading this book, we invite you to be mindful of several components that we encourage you to read and treat as “look fors”. Each of the “look fors” are interdependent components of this book presented and arranged to increase your professional learning and, thereby, successful use in your school/district.

- **Tools of Cultural Proficiency**—Descriptions of the four tools in ways that teach, refresh, or deepen your understanding and facility with the tools in your professional context.
- **Activities**—A progression of professional learning opportunities that have been field-tested for professional use in your school/district.
- **Reflection**—Opportunities for you, the reader, to enhance your individual learning in terms of personal and professional core values and behaviors/actions that open and escort students through doors to ensure equitable access and achievement in all phases of the school experience.
- **Professional Dialogic Learning Activity**—Opportunities for deeper conversations for school and district professional learning that analyzes and alters, as necessary, policies and prevalent practices that provide educators with the means for opening and escorting students through doors to equitable opportunities and achievement outcomes throughout their school experiences.

With this introduction to our narrative, you are prepared to meet the characters within their setting of VUSD. The plot and conflicts within this story are not unlike those in many school districts throughout the United States and Canada. The theme of this story, opening doors through culturally proficient practices, is one that we hope more and more districts will adopt and adapt as a way to educate all children and youth to achieve at high levels.

Each of the educators who hold the positions represented in this book provided written consent for their roles and summarized comments to be used. Following are the educator roles you will be reading and thinking about throughout this book. As you read the vignettes, quite naturally you will think about your own role and the roles of your colleagues. This “thinking about your own thinking” is the overall purpose of Cultural Proficiency and is supported throughout the book with inclusion of the reflection and dialogic activities described above.

## Resources Section

The Resources section of the book provides useful tools to enhance ongoing learning, a matrix of how to use other Cultural Proficiency titles and a Book Study Guide:

- The Book Study Guide is intended for use in deepening individual understanding of the content and for use in collegial professional learning.
- The matrix lists other Cultural Proficiency books and the essential questions that guided the books' development. The guiding questions may guide your deeper learning and your professional growth as well.

As you will see in the Matrix, 15 books on Cultural Proficiency are now available or in production. Each of the Cultural Proficiency titles has a distinct application of the Tools of Cultural Proficiency and the matrix is organized to inform you of which book(s) may be appropriate for your use. Figure 1, The "Apps of Cultural Proficiency" is a pictorial representation of the Cultural Proficiency books. The original and core book, *Cultural Proficiency: A Manual for School Leaders* now in 3rd edition, presents our most detailed description of the Tools of Cultural Proficiency. The books radiating from the "Manual" also present the basic "Tools" in an applied manner relating to the books' intent (e.g., instruction, coaching).

**Figure 1** The "Apps" of Cultural Proficiency

