



PROACTIVE EDUCATIONAL
ADVOCACY FOR PUBLIC
EDUCATION IN NEW MEXICO

the ADVOCATE

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Save the Dates

NMSPA Conference

Feb. 4-5, 2020

Embassy Suites in ABQ

NMASBO Winter Conference

Feb. 19-21, 2020

Embassy Suites in ABQ

*Registrations for both conferences
now open*

2020 NMCEL Summer Conf:

July 21 - 24, 2020

Embassy Suites Hotel
Albuquerque

Developing a Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Educational System

It was an honor to speak to many superintendents and school board members recently at a meeting of the New Mexico School Boards Association about our efforts under the Identity, Equity, and Transformation section of the NMPED. In my role as a Director in this relatively new section of the department under Governor Lujan Grisham, I presented on how we will move forward into 2020 and the second semester of the school year. It was important to talk first about our vision, which is ensuring “students in New Mexico are engaged in a **culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR)** educational system that meets the social, emotional and academic needs of ALL students.” Our focus will be on operationalizing the vision so that we have schools that are CLR and meet the social, emotional and academic needs of ALL students.

Of course, our mission, core values and goals are aligned to the vision and although we have been doing work on CLR, it is now at the center of what we do as the NMPED.

Given that the NMPED’s vision includes CLR, the shared definition in the agency is validating and affirming an individual’s home culture and language to create connections with other cultures and languages in various social contexts. We use CLR as an adjective to refer to CLR assessments, instructional materials, instruction, etc.

To understand CLR we have to understand culture and language. Culture is like an iceberg and at the NMPED we see it as deep patterns of values, beliefs, practices and traditions that have been compiled and normalized over a period of time, setting the standard for what is normal and expected. This is socially acquired knowledge that we learn from each other, and we use this definition because it is inclusive of the home, community or institutions. We have a specific culture in the NMPED, districts and schools.



Mayra Valtierrez

Understanding the complex dynamics of culture plays a critical role in CLR. As represented in an iceberg concept of culture and the levels of culture, there are practices and behaviors associated with surface, shallow and deep culture. Surface-level cultural practices are most easily seen, and the emotional impact is low. Shallow cultural practices are governed by unspoken rules and the emotional impact is high. Deep culture behaviors are aligned to unconscious rules and the emotional impact is intense.

Developing a Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Ed. System (cont. from p.1)

In my team's work we specifically discuss the cultural practices or behaviors that are more likely to be observed in the classroom and that may cause misunderstandings. We have our teachers and educators consider if a behavior is cultural or is naughty. One of the most common examples is eye contact. The beliefs and practices on eye contact in communication vary from one culture to another.

At the NMPED we see language as something that first and foremost allows us to communicate. Language is audible, articulate, meaningful sound as produced by the action of the vocal organs — a systematic means of communicating ideas or feelings by the use of conventionalized signs, sounds, gestures, or marks having understood meanings. There is a formal system of signs and symbols including rules for the formation and transformation of admissible expressions. Our students toggle between their home language — the language utilized by family members in the home and others in the community that is different enough from the parameters defined by language from Standard English — and school language — the language utilized in the context of school that commonly associated with Standard English. Within school, students also have to master academic language or the language used in textbooks, in classrooms, and on tests; different in structure (e.g. heavier on compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences) and vocabulary (e.g. technical terms and common words with specialized meanings) from Standard English.

We often hear that language and culture are connected; we like to make it clear that this is because like culture, language is also socially acquired knowledge that we learn from each other and because it is inclusive of the home, community or institutions.

These rings of culture (on the right) represent our identity. Ethnic culture is at the center and informs other rings of culture. It is important that we know our identity, and that we often hold expectations on cultural behaviors due to what we perceive as normal. This includes disability, as well, because this is part of our identity and who we are.

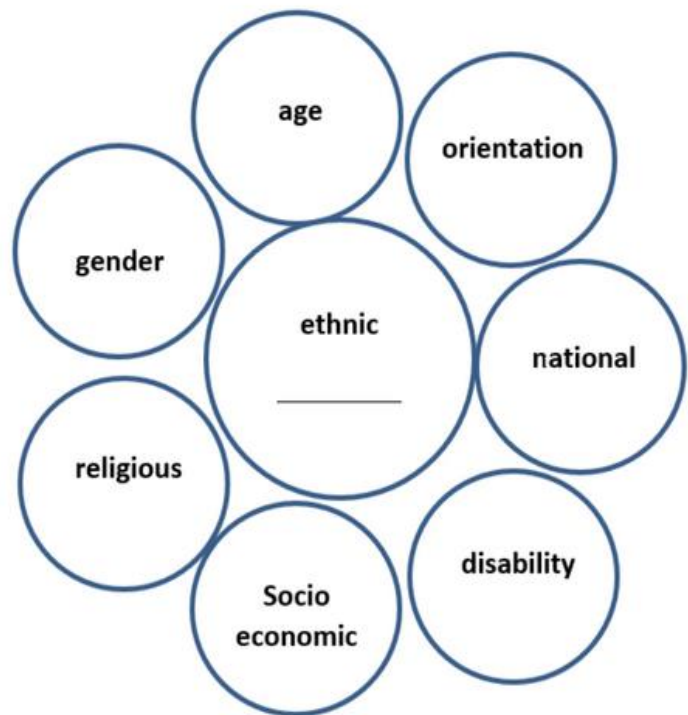
We must focus on the validation and affirmation of students' identities. But, this is not enough. This is simply multicultural education.

The responsive piece in CLR is when we build and bridge and set up our schools and classrooms for students to learn how to toggle between contexts and expected behaviors and language use. The goal is global dexterity so that our students can be anywhere in NM, the US and the world and fit in and participate without giving up who they are — their identities.

The state seal of bilingualism-biliteracy on the diploma of excellence is a capstone that is attached to the high school diploma of excellence that represents college and career readiness and as an addition to the diploma, represents a student's knowledge in language, culture and identity.

—Mayra Valtierrez, Director
NMPED Language and Culture Division

RINGS OF CULTURE



In the next issue of The Advocate, Mayra Valtierrez will give us the NMPED's perspective under Kara Bobroff, Deputy Secretary of Identity, Equity, and Transformation, of the Yazzie/Martinez lawsuit.