Where Is Equity in the National Standards?
A Critical Review of the INTASC, NCATE, and NBPTS Standards

Barbara Beyerbach & Thurman D. Nassoiy,
State University of New York at Oswego

Abstract

There is a call for ensuring that all students learn, echoed through the national standards and other reform documents. But how serious is the focus on equity in these standards? We reviewed the standards from three major national standards movements focusing on developing standards for experienced teachers (NBPTS), preservice teachers (NCATE), and beginning teachers (INTASC). We analyze the standards and articulate themes regarding language use, critically analyzing the language and suggesting important revisions to more comprehensively focus on equity. We then share equity standards developed by other groups that exemplify a stronger focus on equity.

Introduction

As a professor and a graduate student in a teacher education program aimed at teaching for social justice, we are concerned about how the standards movement impacts equity issues in the schools. As scholar practitioners, we need to attend to the theoretical assumptions underlying these standards, as well as the practical impact on teaching and learning. We need to take a critical look at the view of knowledge underlying the standards. Critical pedagogy (Giroux & McLaren, 1989; Wink, 2000) encourages teachers to look at their practice and at schooling from a perspective that examines how social structures of race, class, and gender embed power relations that impact teaching and learning, privileging some learners while marginalizing and even denying opportunities to others. Equity-based teaching

practice aims at what Freire (1982) calls *praxis*—becoming critically conscious about these social issues and then taking social action to reduce the gap in student achievement that results from preferential treatment of some groups within the larger society (Bell, 1997).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) talk of three kinds of teacher knowledge: (1) *knowledge for practice* such as that gained from experts or books, (2) *knowledge in practice* such as narrative accounts of practice, and (3) *knowledge of practice* such as critically questioning knowledge given, and situating the classroom within the larger context of education and society. They argue that all three forms of knowledge are necessary for developing an optimal teaching practice. Their third notion of knowledge most closely aligns with the perspectives of critical pedagogy and equity-based practice embedded in our teacher education program.

Hostetler (2002) critiques the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) as supporting a technicist view that devalues practical knowledge, suggesting that they are based on what Cochran-Smith and Lytle label as *knowledge for practice*. He suggests that these standards are not neutral, for they "leave unchallenged a status quo largely hostile to practical wisdom" (p. 123). We wondered if Holsteler's critique could extend to the standards of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), and where and how the national standards support development of equity-based practice. In committing to teaching for social justice, one seeks to develop all three types of teacher knowledge, with emphasis on *knowledge of practice* that promotes a critical pedagogy.

In this article we will: (1) describe what we mean by teaching for social justice and its relationship to equity-based teaching practice, (2) examine three sets of national standards with respect to their incorporation of a focus on equity, and (3) suggest alternative sets of standards that show more promise with regards to their potential to move schools toward more equitable, socially just practice.

Theoretical Background

When we claim to teach for social justice, we acknowledge that social injustice exists, and that there are systemic barriers to educational opportunity (Darling-Hammond, 1998). In our teacher education program, we emphasize attending to the social/cultural context within which schools are located, acknowledging that too often urban contexts are omitted in our representation of teaching sites. We require students to read about and discuss urban education issues and research related to effective practice in urban contexts (*knowledge for practice*). We require that all students complete an urban field placement in conjunction with a course that promotes their understanding of that context (*knowledge in practice*) within the connected coursework. Supported by school-based faculty, we encourage students to reflect on contrasts between resources and practices in urban versus suburban, and

wealthy versus poor school settings, and critically examine the impact of social structures on student opportunities to learn within diverse contexts. We aim to move them beyond a "let's celebrate diversity" perspective, which they often bring to the program, towards a deeper examination of how various oppressions contribute to the marginalization of some groups.

We emphasize a multicultural approach in our program with a focus on developing culturally relevant pedagogy (Gay, 2000; Grant & Sleeter, 1998; Ladson-Billings 1994; Sleeter & Grant, 1999). We see teachers as "catalysts for social change" and encourage an anti-bias (Derman-Sparks & The ABC Taskforce, 1989; Grayson & Martin, 1997), anti-racist (McLean Donaldson, 2001), anti-sexist and other anti-oppressive stances that lead to the development of a critical pedagogy. Bell (1997) articulates this position saying, "The goal of social justice education is full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psycho-logically safe and secure. Social justice involves social actors who have a sense of their own agency as well as a sense of social responsibility toward and with others and the society as a whole . . ." (p. 3).

In our program, we pay particular attention to developing a common language and shared meanings for concepts such as equity, multicultural, oppression, racism, ableism, sexism, classism, elitism, heterosexism, critical pedagogy, and social reconstructivism. We acknowledge the importance of understanding one's own positionality and engage students in a number of approaches using self-reflection, autobiography (Bell, 1997; Cochran Smith & Lytle, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1997; Noffke & Stevenson, 1995; Schon, 1983), development of cultural diversity awareness through human relations models and multicultural education (Banks & McGee Banks, 1993; Sleeter & Grant, 1999), and anti-bias teaching (Byrnes & Kiger, 1996; Derman-Sparks & The ABC Taskforce, 1989; Grayson & Martin, 1997; McLean-Donaldson, 2001). Self-reflection about one's own beliefs and attitudes is an essential first step in developing equity based practice (Banks & McGee Banks, 1993). We aim to develop students who have a critical perspective and have a commitment and ability to take action to effect social change.

In developing this teaching for social justice stance, we need to attend to the larger political context and its impact on teachers' power to effect social change. We are particularly interested in how the standards movement, allegedly aimed at leaving no child behind, incorporates, supports, or excludes language relating to equity practice and teaching for social justice. Spring (2004) critiques the No Child Left Behind legislation as forcing standardization that creates uniformity in knowledge taught in schools, endangering minority cultures and languages. We reviewed standards from three major national standards movements focusing on developing standards for experienced teachers (NBPTS), preservice teachers (NCATE), and beginning teachers (INTASC). We selected these three sets since they

seem to be having the broadest impact on post-secondary teacher education. We carefully studied language used around issues of diversity and equity in both these and alternative examples of standards, indicating implications for teaching and learning. Further, we examined the epistemological perspective underlying these standards, and the types of knowledge they implicitly or explicitly value or devalue.

Method

Table 1 includes the standards we reviewed from each organization. These encompass hundreds of pages of narrative.

Table 1.

National Standards Reviewed as Retrieved from http://www.ccsso.org/projects/Interstate_New_Teacher_Assessment_and_SupportConsortium/projects/Standards_Development/, http://www.nbpts.org/candidates/ckc.cfm, and http://www.ncate.org/standard/programstds.htm.

NBPTS Standards:
Middle Childhood Generalist Standards
Early Adolescence Generalist Standards
Library Media Standards
Middle Childhood through Early Adolescence Mathematics Standards
Adolescence and Young Adulthood Mathematics Standards
Music Standards
Physical Education Standards
Early Adolescence/ Science Standards Adolescence and Young Adulthood Science Standards
Social Studies-History Standards World Languages Other than English Standards
Early Childhood and Middle Childhood/Art Standards
Early Adolescence through Young Adulthood Art Standards
Career and Technical Education Standards
English as a New Language Standards
Early Adolescence English Language Arts Standards
Adolescence and Young Adulthood English Language Arts Standards
Exceptional Needs Standards
Early Childhood Generalist Standards

NCATE Standards:
Professional Standards
NCATE Program Standards:
    Educational Computing and Technology
    Initial and Advanced Programs in Early Childhood Education
    The Accreditation of Programs In Educational Communications and Instructional
       Technology (ECIT)
    Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership for Principals, Superintendents,
       Curriculum Directors, and Supervisors
    Program for Initial Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts for Middle/Junior
       High and Senior High School Teaching

Program for Initial and Advanced Preparation of Teachers of Special Education
Program for Advanced Preparation of Teachers of Reading
Program Standards for Elementary Teacher Preparation
Initial Programs in Health Education
Program for Initial Preparation of K-4 Teachers with an Emphasis in Mathematics, 5-8 Mathematics Teachers, 7-12 Mathematics Teachers
Initial and Advanced Programs in Middle Level Teacher Education
Initial and Advanced Programs in Physical Education
Programs for the School Library Media Specialist
Training and Field Placement Programs in School Psychology
A Guide for Performance-Based Assessment, Accountability, and Program Development in School Psychology Training Programs
Program for Initial Preparation of Teachers of Science or Science Specialists
Programs for Initial Preparation of Teachers of Social Studies or Middle/Junior High and Secondary Teaching
The Accreditation of Initial Programs in P-12 ESL Teacher Education
Program for Initial Preparation of Teachers of Technology Education

INTASC Standards:
Model Standards for Beginning Teacher Licensing, Assessment and Development:
    A Resource for State Dialogue
Model Standards for Licensing Beginning Foreign Language Teachers:
    A Resource for State Dialogue
Model Standards for Licensing Classroom Teachers and Specialist in the Arts:
    A Resource for State Dialogue
Model Standards In Science For Beginning Teacher Licensing and Development:
    A Resource for State Dialogue
Model Standards for Licensing General and Special Education Teachers of Students with Disabilities: A Resource for State Dialogue
Model Standards in Mathematics for Beginning Teacher Licensing & Development:
    A Resource for State Dialogue

The first time we read through the entire sets of standards we marked any passage that dealt with diversity/equity issues. We reread those passages and began to develop a coding schema describing the types of language used and issues incorporated. We looked at each set of standards to determine how they defined and advocated for educational equity within standards most closely dealing with diversity and equity, as well as throughout the entire document. We recorded quotes and representative phrases from each set of standards. We then looked across the sets for emerging themes regarding language use, critically analyzing the language and suggesting important revisions to more comprehensively focus on equity. We conducted word counts of equity related terminology in representative standards from each organization. We then searched for equity standards developed by other groups that might inform the work of the national standards we reviewed.

Findings of the Analysis of INTASC, NCATE, and NBPTS Standards: Appreciating Diversity

An analysis of the language used within each of the three sets of national standards yielded some commonalities across the sets, as well as some differences. All three sets focused on diversity both throughout the standards, and as separate standards such as "Diversity of Learners," "Equity, Diversity, and Fairness," and "Respect for Diversity." The standards incorporated language such as "respect for individual, cultural, religious, and racial differences" (NBPTS, 1997, p. vi), showing ". . . respect for the diverse talents of all learners" (INTASC, 1992, p. 16), and beliefs "that all students can learn" (NCATE, 2000, p. 63). There was a focus across all three sets on respecting diverse talents and learners, linking curriculum to students' lives, being sensitive to community and cultural norms, using multiple assessments, and exploring different viewpoints. There was less focus across the board on socioeconomic differences and how they impact learning, and almost no mention of differences in sexual orientation. Only the NBPTS standards mentioned sexual orientation; the NCATE standards use the phrase "difference in family structures" which implicitly could include gay and lesbian parented families. It was very unclear in the standards which types of knowledge, if any knowledge, would be essential in developing this "respect" and "appreciation" for diversity.

Skimming the Surface on Equity Issues

All three sets of standards do incorporate a form of the word, *equity*. For example, the INTASC (1992) Model Standards suggest that teachers "provide active and equitable engagement of students in productive tasks" (p. 23), the NBPTS (2001e) Middle Childhood Generalist Standards say accomplished teachers "treat students equitably" (p. vi), and the NCATE (2001) Professional Standards say, "They understand language acquisition; cultural influences on learning; exceptionalities; diversity of student populations, families, and communities; and inclusion and equity in classrooms and schools" (p. 19). However a close examination of these sets of standards reveals that they do little to unpack the meaning of these words or how a teacher would accomplish this. Again, they do not identify knowledge that might contribute to "treating students equitably."

Whereas race, class, gender, ability, language, and religion were explicitly mentioned in each set of standards with regard to diversity, these terms were rarely linked to the concepts of equity, power relations, prejudice, or oppression. Most attention focused on cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity. Though there was some talk about stereotyping (e.g., INTASC, 2002a; NBPTS, 2001a), and some language about testing bias (e.g., INTASC, 2001), an anti-bias (Derman-Sparks & The ABC Taskforce, 1989), critical perspective was noticeably absent in the national standards.

Perhaps because the model standards were written earliest, the INTASC (1992)

standards address equity issues least of the three sets examined. The later INTASC standards (e.g., INTASC,1995a; INTASC 1995b; INTASC, 2001; INTASC, 2002a; INTASC, 2002b) explore the relevance of cultural, ethnic, gender, class, and ability differences in more depth, often with specific vignettes, but still do little linking of these to equity issues. Further, some of the vignettes miss the mark. For example, the Math standards include a vignette on feeding ducklings for a population of culturally diverse urban second and third graders (INTASC, 1995a, pp. 40-41), an experience not likely to be familiar to these children. In a later vignette, Ms. Morgan is a teacher who responds with sensitivity to cultural differences, but who does not respond to a female's (Kara's) pressing questions, rather she focuses on responding to male students (INTASC, 1995a, pp. 63-64). Thus vignettes focusing on the overlapping nature of oppressions are noticeably absent.

The NCATE (2000) Program Standards for Elementary Teacher Preparation mention fairness and avoidance of bias in the assessment system, but don't suggest disaggregating candidate data by race, class, gender, and ability to examine disparities in student performance. They promote valuing diversity but do not suggest that a teacher's role is to challenge injustice.

The NBPTS (2001a) standards include the most detailed focus on equity of any of the three sets of national standards, claiming that "accomplished teachers advocated for the equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and access" (p. 29). They specify that accomplished teachers are aware of gender, racial, ethnic and other stereotypes and work to counter their influence, and talk about helping students recognize discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes. The NBPTS (2001a) Early Adolescence Generalist Standards mention socioeconomic status and sexual orientation explicitly. The NBPTS (2001c) Exceptional Needs Standards take a more activist stance, suggesting that teachers help students recognize and work against discrimination, prejudice, and stereotyping. The NBPTS (2001d) Library Media Standards mention equal access, confronting issues of diversity to proactively promote equity, and explicitly cite race, nationality, ethnicity, home language, socio-economic status, age, religion, ability level, exceptionalities, physical challenges, sexual orientation and gender as areas where individuals should not be denied equitable opportunities. Select NBPTS standards are the only standards that define the teacher role as that of activist, who encourages student activism. They state that accomplished teachers "actively and positively challenge prejudice, derogatory comments, and stereotyped perspectives" (NBPTS, 2001b, p. 11). This rare exception comes closest to what we aim for in developing a critical pedagogy aimed at social justice.

Counting "Equity Words" in the Standards

To confirm and fine tune our findings about the language of the standards, we chose to do word counts of certain equity related vocabulary, derived from the literature reviewed earlier in this article, to see if the frequency of these terms

reflected the lack of equity focus and the subtle differences across the sets of standards. We confined our search to the generalist standards for each organization. For example, for the NBPTS standards we searched the Early Childhood Generalist (NBPTS, 2001b), Middle Childhood Generalist (NBPTS, 2001e), and Early Adolescence Generalist (NBPTS, 2001a) standards. For the NCATE standards, we examined the Program Standards for Initial and Advanced Preparation in Early Childhood (NCATE, 1994), and Middle Level Teacher Education (NCATE, 1995), and The Program Standards for Elementary Teacher Preparation (NCATE 2000). We also examined the Proposed Wisconsin State Standards (Bitters, 2002), which have a strong equity focus. We selected words such as equity, discrimination, bias, sexual orientation, stereotypes, racism, and race that are commonly used in the discourse about equity in education. Table 2 reports the frequencies of the selected terms in each of the documents. The final column incorporates word counts from the Proposed Wisconsin Standards, as a contrast between the national standards and a more equity-focused approach.

As can be seen from examination of the table, words such as *culture* occur much more frequently than words such as bias, racism oppression, and sexism, across all sets of standards. When comparing the Proposed Wisconsin Equity Standards to the three sets of National Standards, the Wisconsin Standards include the term bias, stereotype, race, sexual orientation, and gender much more frequently than the national standards. This pattern supports our earlier analysis.

Table 2.
Frequency of Equity Words in Various National and State Standards.

Term	NBPTS 2001b 84 pgs.	NBPTS 2001e 80 pgs.	NBPTS 2001a 87 pgs.	NCATE 1994 20 pgs.	NCATE 2000 71 pgs.	NCATE 1995 62 pgs.	INTASC 1992 36 pgs.	Proposed Wisconsin Standards 15 pgs.
Equity	9 (5 in heading)	3 (1 in heading)	4 (1 in heading)	0	0	0	0	8
Sexual Orientation	1	1	1	0	0	2	0	6
Socio-Economic Status	2	3	2	0	2	2	0	4
Bias	1	1	1	1	8 (2 in heading)	3	0	15
Advocates	5	3	4	3	0	6	0	3
Equitable	2	0	2	0	2	10	1	4
Stereotype	1	3	4	0	0	0	0	6
Sexism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Racism	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Gender	4	7	5	0	3	2	2	14
Oppression	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Race	1	0	1	0	2	4	0	10
Culture	13	10	9	2	3	0	1	24

Heightened Awareness in Standards
for Historically Marginalized Groups

Across the board, the standards most likely to incorporate focus on stereotyping and bias were those dealing with already marginalized learners (e.g., second language learning, special education). For example, the INTASC (2002a) Standards for Foreign Language Teachers say that accomplished teachers "ensure that cultural stereotyping is addressed appropriately in lessons and materials and anticipate and prepare for discussions and reactions from older learners about cultural differences" (p. 15), and that they construct assessment strategies that are fair and equitable to all students. The INTASC (2001) Standards for General and Special Education Teachers of Students with Disabilities authors likewise critique the disproportionate representation of certain minority groups in specific disability categories, and caution against bias that leads to confusing cultural, ethnic, gender and linguistic differences with "manifestations of a disability" (p. 15). It may be that the professionals authoring these standards had more of what Cochran Smith and Lytle (1999) call knowledge in practice, and knowledge of practice because of their experiences, backgrounds, and reflections on those, through studying about and working with students who have been historically marginalized.

Absence of Focus on Self-Reflection
with Respect to One's Own Social Position

Whereas most of the literature on equity practices emphasizes a need for preservice and practicing teachers to have many opportunities to understand their own attitudes and biases regarding race, social class, and culture, most of these standards did not reflect this emphasis except for a general call to become reflective about one's practice. A noteworthy exception was the NBPTS (2001a) Early Adolescence Generalist Standards, which called for examining the roles that teachers' "own cultural background, biases, values, and personal experiences play in their teaching" (p. 54). The INTASC and NCATE standards generally mention the importance of reflection in teacher development, but don't tie that to issues of equity or awareness of bias. This focus on a more in depth reflection on one's own cultural background is necessary for the development of critical pedagogy. In the next section of this article, we will describe several sets of state and national standards that exemplify much stronger equity based-educational standards that support social justice pedagogy, and do focus on the development of critical reflection in the development of knowledge of practice.

Examples of Equity Focused Standards

Barbara Bitters, director of the Wisconsin Equity Mission Team, has been active in developing a set of Equity Indicators for Wisconsin's Education Standards (Bitters, 2002). The language in these standards is much stronger than any of the

national standards, claiming that all learning is cultural, that the very process of inquiry has a cultural dimension, and that the discipline itself privileges a certain culture. The epistemological perspective in these standards is explicit, and knowledge of practice is privileged. The link between teacher instructional strategies and advantaging or disadvantaging some students is made explicit, and programs that promote teacher awareness of how student expectation can be shaped by subtle differential teacher interactions (e.g., *Generating Expectations for Student Achievement* by Grayson & Martin, 1997; *Teacher Expectations and Student Achievement*, by the Los Angeles County Office of Education, n.d.; and, *A World of Difference* by the Anti Defamation League, n.d.) are described and advocated.

The Wisconsin Equity Indicators (Bitters, 2002) call for teachers who are able to distribute tasks equitably, use inclusive (gender, race, ethnicity, age, ability, sexuality) curriculum, provide equitable attention to all students, and identify bias in testing and curriculum. The standards call for teachers who recognize intended and unintended curriculum messages, which include stereotyping, omissions, differential access, bias, and discrimination; and promote an explicit anti-bias approach. These standards for teachers, administrators, and counselors explicitly call for a reflective-practitioner approach where teachers examine the relationship between their expectations and student achievement, and critically examine myths underlying school failure. They promote in-depth self-examination of one's racial identity, cultural heritage, gender, sexual orientation, and how these play out in the classroom. These equity indicators go far beyond the national standards in linking issues of diversity with a practice that is comprehensively focused on equity. They go far beyond the national standards in identifying specific knowledge for, in, and of practice that is essential to develop equity practice.

The American Educational Research Association's (AERA) special interest group (SIG), Critical Analysis of Race, Ethnicity, Class, & Gender, has organized an AERA mini-course for the past two annual conferences, as well as a symposium on "Accountability for Social Justice: How to Write and Use Standards to Foster Social Justice Education" (Andrzejewski, et al., 2003). At the mini-course, project collaborators from a variety of AERA social justice oriented SIGs shared draft sets of standards and discussed issues about how to ensure a social justice perspective is represented in the standards. Linda Symcox (2002) provided a historical context about the history of standards in relation to social justice, drawing from her book that critiques the National History Standards. Marta Baltadano, director of the Critical Educators for Social Justice SIG, shared a vision for comprehensive social justice standards.

Educators from three states, all with significant populations of indigenous (and historically marginalized) peoples, shared exemplary state level standards that do promote culturally relevant, equity-oriented pedagogy. Ray Barnhardt shared The Alaska Standards for Culturally-Responsive Schools (Assembly of Alaska Native Educators, 1998), which ensure that Alaskan students are engaged in an inclusive, culturally relevant curriculum based on traditional ways of knowing and learning.

The Alaskan standards became the impetus for the Hawaii Guidelines for Culturally Healthy and Responsive Learning Environments (Native Hawaiian Education Council, 2002), which focus on maintaining practices that perpetuate Hawaiian heritage, traditions and language to support all learners. Both of these sets of standards apply to K-12 learning contexts. At the higher education level, Standards for Dine College and Arizona State University's Navajo teacher education program focus on developing teachers with the values, knowledge, and skills to promote children's academic skills and cultural identities in both Navajo and English (McLaughlin, 2003). All three of these exemplars focus on the importance of culturally relevant teaching, and use equity-oriented language.

Another example of a useful equity tool for assessing a school context is the Educational Equity Assessment Tool, developed by the National Alliance of Partnerships in Equity (n.d.). These standards link honoring diversity and respect for individuals with issues of equity (e.g., combating discrimination and harassment, developing non-discriminatory codes for acceptable dress, behavior, and language). These standards broadly examine equity in the learning environment, in governance, in preservice and inservice education, and call for self-reflection regarding equity issues and in developing a social activist stance. They call for evaluation of personnel to ensure that issues of equity and diversity are addressed, and engaging educators in data analysis that disaggregates student achievement data to ensure that all groups benefit from educational practices. They call for access to higher-level courses for all students, equitable distribution of resources, and recruiting historically underrepresented groups when hiring educators. Like the Wisconsin equity indicators, the National Alliance of Partnerships in Equity Standards provide powerful examples of what strong equity standards at the national level could look like.

Conclusions and Future Considerations

From a "teaching for social justice" perspective, the INTASC, NCATE, and NBPTS standards should be revised to incorporate more explicit links between teaching for diversity and critical, equity practice. They should incorporate a focus on self-examination of biases as a starting point for educators, with a more in depth understanding of the structural nature and interconnections of various oppressions (e.g., racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism), and how these play out in the classroom. They should demonstrate an in depth understanding of institutional oppression and how it works in schools and society to marginalize some learners. There needs to be greater focus on anti-bias teaching and assessment strategies, as well as focus on how to disaggregate data on students to examine learning outcomes for various groups. Scholar-practitioners can contribute to this reform effort by participating in the dialogue about the impact of the standards, and critically examining them with respect to an articulated theoretical stance. As Hostetler

(2002) concludes, "Insofar as it is a political reality that teacher educators must show themselves accountable to the INTASC principles, teacher educators and their students can show themselves accountable by articulating and justifying their departures from the principles" (p. 60). Our analysis of the standards from a critical, social justice perspective offers justification for such a departure, suggesting equity-based teaching practices, and an epistemology that privileges, or that at least includes *knowledge of practice* that becomes more central to the standards used to regulate and assess teacher education programs.

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About the Authors

Barbara Beyerbach is a Professor of Education at SUNY Oswego who teaches in the area of methods and culturally relevant teaching. She co-directs a long-term professional development project, Project SMART, and serves as a Professional Development Liaison at Lanigan Elementary School.

Thurman D. Nassoiy is a graduate student in SUNY Oswego's masters level teacher education program. Thurman works with several university based projects serving diverse student populations including Empowerment Through Education and Sailing Toward Excellence. He plans to continue his studies in a doctoral program focused on Cultural Studies and Teaching for Social Justice.