

Documents in Support of Education in a Multicultural Society (EDF 3610)

Remaining a three-credit required course in the Elementary Education Degree Program

The Curriculum, Culture and Educational Inquiry Department Faculty

Florida Atlantic University

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Rationale

In view of the fact that the Department of Curriculum, Culture and Educational Inquiry (CCEI), the College of Education, and Florida Atlantic University have publicly pledged to uphold the values of diversity and social justice; and

The demographics of our service communities reflects an increasing number of students of underserved racial and ethnic groups, incommensurate with the diversity of their teachers, underscore the urgent need for culturally responsive pedagogy for students and the critical need for pedagogical competence among future teachers; moreover

Superintendents, school board members, multicultural curriculum specialists, advocacy groups, principals, current teachers and students have expressed concerns about the proposed diminished focus on multicultural education in the teacher preparation program; and

The courses in multicultural education offered by CCEI, developed and informed by the scholarship and engagement of faculty in diverse communities, have a long and documented history of being transformative in the knowledge, skills and dispositions of the students, as evident in student evaluations, testimonials and teaching awards of all of its program faculty; moreover

Any diminished emphasis on multicultural education with its emphasis on equity and social justice will further undermine our students' abilities to close the opportunity gaps in current educational policy, curriculum and practice.

We urge our colleagues to support the reinstatement of EDF 3610 as a required 3-credit course in the teacher preparation program.

Supporting Multicultural Education Courses in Teacher Certification: The Relationship Between Context and Content

(A brief from the Department of Curriculum, Culture and Educational Inquiry submitted to Ms. Gracie Diaz, Director, Research Program/Services, EXCEED Grant)

As part of a wider discussion surrounding the recent procurement of Florida Atlantic University's College of Education Excellence in Elementary Education grant, the role and place of undergraduate multicultural education in the teacher certification program is subject to evaluation. The Department of Curriculum, Culture and Educational Inquiry houses both multicultural education courses in the elementary education teacher certification program. To that end, the Department of Curriculum, Culture and Educational Inquiry wishes to draw attention to a number of factors supporting the continuance of EDF 2085 Introduction to Diversity for Educators and EDF 3610 Education in Multicultural Society as required courses in elementary teacher certification:

- 1) In Florida Atlantic University's Strategic Plan, *A Strategic Plan for the Race to Excellence*, "diversity" is included as a university platform to achieve excellence. The university's commitment to diversity is expressed as follows: "Identify and promote opportunities to diversify our students, faculty, and staff – and build institutional cross-cultural competencies."

A second platform in FAU's strategic plan is Peace, Justice and Human Rights, and once again diversity is cited as an institutional priority: "Identify and promote opportunities to diversify our students, faculty, and staff – and build institutional cross-cultural competencies." The Department of Curriculum, Culture and Educational Inquiry contends that EDF 2085 and EDF 3610 constitute critical elements in achieving the university's vision within the elementary education teacher certification program.

- 2) The Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) is the accrediting body for teacher certification programs at Florida Atlantic University. One element of CAEP assessment involves the imperative to develop a Continuous Improvement Plan. Via faculty assembly discussion and vote the College of Education approved "diversity" as the centerpiece for its CAEP CIP. The Department of Curriculum, Culture and Educational Inquiry suggests that any attempt to remove EDF 2085 and EDF 3610 from the elementary teacher certification program would legitimately raise CAEP concerns about the college's commitment to diversity.
- 3) The College of Education, under the guidance of the Dean, has undertaken an initiative supported by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). The corresponding National Improvement Committee's charge is to develop strategies that advance the recruitment and retention of black and Latino males in teacher certification programs across the country.

One of the elements under review is the extent to which the experiences and context of this demographic are made relevant by the content in teacher education programs. The Department of Curriculum, Culture and Educational Inquiry views both EDF 2085 and EDF 3610 as critical elements in the NIC mission to recruit and retain black and Latino students to the College of Education's teacher certification program.

Generally, then, the two courses identified above reflect the fundamental mission of Florida Atlantic University and the College of Education to celebrate and support cultural diversity among students, and to graduate elementary teachers who are sensitive to the prevailing context of their professional work. FAU elementary education graduates are employed primarily by Palm Beach County (about 62% black and Latino students) and Broward County (about 70% black and Latino students). Teaching these students content in mathematics, reading/language arts, science and social science requires teachers who understand and address the sometimes unique challenges confronted by students within this demographic. EDF 2085 and EDF 3610 provide teachers with the knowledge and understanding to meet this challenge.

Sincerely,
Emery Hyslop-Margison, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair,
Department of Curriculum, Culture and Educational Inquiry
Florida Atlantic University



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November 4, 2015

Dr. Valerie J. Bristor, Dean
College of Education
Florida Atlantic University
777 Glades Road, ED 215
Boca Raton, Florida 33431

Via email to bristor@fau.edu and regular mail

Dear Dr. Bristor:

On behalf of The School Board of Palm Beach County, I write you to let you know how strongly the School Board supports the teacher preparation program that has been in place at Florida Atlantic University. Your beginning teachers come to us prepared not only to teach the curriculum for which they were hired, but also to support the whole child, inclusive of their social, emotional, and cultural needs. Because of this well-rooted foundational training, our students benefit from having an FAU graduate in the classroom.

As a School Board, we believe that one of the reasons your teacher graduates are so well prepared has been your requirement of completion of the course EDF 3610, Education In a Multicultural Society. As you know, our school district is a diverse one. Our classrooms contain upwards of 60 percent or more students of color. Ten years from now, that number will be even higher. To reduce this course to one of choice (as an elective) rather than a requirement would do a great disservice to both your college students and our K-12 students. How cutting edge it was in 1989 to have you become the first Florida University to offer and require a course in multicultural education! To take that away would, in our eyes, certainly be a step backwards.

Thank you in advance for your time and attention to our concern. We wish to continue the strong relationship we have always had with Florida Atlantic University and hope you will help us in our desire to have the best prepared teachers for our truly diverse community we call home.

Sincerely,

Chuck Shaw
School Board Chairman

CS/KO:cb/cy

c: Frank A. Barbieri, Jr., Esq., Vice Chairman
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Joaquin Garcia, M.D., Chair
Samantha Conde, Vice-Chair
Aimee Cernicharo, Chair-elect

www.hispaniceducationcoalitionpbc.org

Dean Valerie Bristor
College of Education
Florida Atlantic University

Dear Dean Bristor,

It has come to the attention of the Hispanic Education Coalition that there is currently a proposal to diminish the role of EDF 3610, "Education in a Multicultural Society" among the core requirements taken by elementary majors. As an organization which advocates for educational equity for Latino students, and indeed all students, we are very concerned with this possibility. We understand that the college needs to bolster the elementary major's content background in English, social studies, mathematics and science and we support that. However, there are times when in an effort to resolve one issue, we create another problem.

We believe that any integration of this additional content should not reduce the two courses in multicultural education FAU currently requires of its future elementary teachers. In addition, a plan to place EDF 3610 as an "elective among three courses" creates the great likelihood that a student could graduate from FAU with an elementary education degree and never take a course in diversity and education which FAU faculty provide. This would be a serious step backward given FAU's historical leadership in multicultural education.

FAU graduates who will teach in Palm Beach County will be working in a district which is currently composed of 62% students of color (Black and Latino) and that proportion will increase in the future. Courses which address this diversity of cultures, unique learning needs and representation in the curriculum should be required of all teachers, not electives.

The Executive Board of the Hispanic Education Coalition has discussed this issue and resolved to urge you and all pertinent FAU faculty/administrators to support the maintenance of EDF 3610 as a core three semester hour requirement. We believe that current/future teachers with this background have the best chance of narrowing the "academic gap" between students of color and their mainstream peers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Joaquin Garcia".

Joaquin Garcia, M.D.
Chair, Executive Board
Hispanic Education Coalition



Dean Valerie Bristor
Florida Atlantic University
College of Education, 47-ED 215
777 Glades Road
Boca Raton, FL 33431

Deandre J. Poole, Ph.D.
Chair
Jackie Perkins-Calloway
Vice Chair
2216 22nd Way
West Palm Beach, FL
33407

Dear Dean Bristor:

As chair of the Coalition for Black Student Achievement of Palm Beach County (**CBSA**), and as a concerned citizen, with relatives attending Palm Beach County Schools, it has been brought to the attention of the Coalition for Black Student Achievement that there is a proposal to change EDF 3610 *Education in a Multicultural Society*, from a core requirement, to an elective, in the College of Education. This course explores historical perspectives on issues central to education in the context of diversity at the local, national and global levels. Students conduct research on topics in multicultural and global education that highlight the experience and perspectives of underrepresented groups. In its current form, this course is required for all elementary majors.

Florida Atlantic University has historically placed significant emphasis on multicultural education in the preparation of all teachers. It is imperative that current and future teachers have a strong academic background concerning diversity in U.S. schools and as a component of their university preparation. The **CBSA** stands in solidarity with the faculty in the Department of Curriculum, Culture, and Educational Inquiry, who voted unanimously to maintain the course in its current form.

The School Board of Palm Beach County is vitally concerned about raising the academic achievement of all students, and particularly the achievement of Black and Hispanic students. Currently, the district is undergoing an educational equity audit, and will soon release its strategic plan that will set the vision for the future of the school district. Additionally, **CBSA** is anticipating that part of that strategic plan will address educational equity for Black and Hispanic students. It is important to note that the Palm Beach County School District is composed of more than 60% students of color and this proportion is expected to rise in the future.

Finally, both the Hispanic Education Coalition and the Coalition for Black Student Achievement strongly endorses that the College of Education maintain EDF 3610, "Education in a Multicultural Society" as a required three semester hour course taken by all future elementary teachers who will graduate from Florida Atlantic University.

If I can provide you with additional information, please feel free to contact me at (561) 229-3456 or by email at deandrepoole@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,
Deandre J. Poole, Ph.D.
Chairman
Coalition for Black Student Achievement



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WEST PALM BEACH, FL 33406

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CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER

KAREN WHETSELL
ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

PHONE: 561-434-8255 / FAX: 561-434-8091

[HTTP://WWW.PALMBEACHSCHOOLS.ORG/CURRICULUM/](http://www.palmbeachschools.org/curriculum/)

January 5, 2016

TO: Dr. Valerie J. Bristor, Dean – FAU, College of Education, Boca Raton

FROM: Myra B. Leavy Bazemore, Manager – African, African American, Latino and Gender Studies

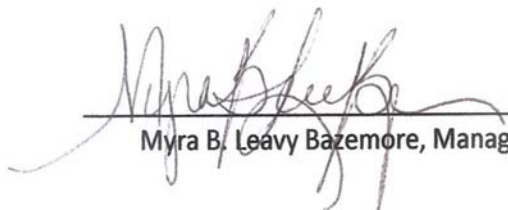
SUBJECT: EDF 3610 – Education in a Multicultural Society

Commensurate with the Palm Beach County School Board, this letter serves to express support from the Office of African, African American, Latino and Gender Studies for maintaining EDF 3610 (Education in a Multicultural Society) as a required, 3 semester course.

Our office is tasked with ensuring the equitable education of Black and Latino students, among others, who make up more than 60% of the total population of students in the District. Because students of color are the majority of all learners, and they exhibit significantly depressed proficiency in reading, math, social studies and science, we believe that it is imperative that all teachers have the mandatory coursework that FAU offers now to meet the unique challenges of educating our lowest performing students.

Such scholars as Dr. Pedro Noguera (NYU), Dr. Geneva Gay (UW) and Dr. Lisa Delpit (FIU) agree that teacher expectations, cultural competence and command of strategies and best practices in teaching culturally diverse students are vital to improving test scores and creating college ready students. Our office agrees, and suggests that such preparation should continue to be provided at Florida Atlantic University through the EDF 3610 course. To eliminate the course as required would compromise the only standard of competence that students have received from FAU educated teachers and administrators to this point.

Florida Atlantic University has an excellent history of preparing aspiring teachers and administrators to educate students of various cultures, and we trust that this exemplary track record will continue. Based on the needs of the students of Palm Beach County Schools, as outlined above, the Office of African, African American, Latino and Gender Studies respectfully requests that Florida Atlantic University elects to continue offering EDF 3610 as a required course for completing an undergraduate degree in Education.



Myra B. Leavy Bazemore, Manager



5 January 2016

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

I am proud to say I earned my doctorate in Educational Leadership from Florida Atlantic University in April 1992. As an alum who is a public school administrator with over 22 years of experience, I am troubled by a recent direction change as it relates for courses required for university students who choose teaching as their career. It is my understanding that the course **EDF 3610 Education in a Multicultural Society** is set to become an optional, not required, course for the preparation of teachers here at Florida Atlantic University.

I believe that this would be a tremendous error that will have far reaching and negative consequences.

I am currently honored to be the **2015 Florida Principal of the Year**. As an active school leader with K-12 administrative and teaching experience, I understand full well that our educators need to know many things. Chief among them is, above content knowledge, an extensive understanding of their students' backgrounds and cultures. I recruit and hire teachers for a culturally and racially diverse student body. The teacher with most experience with diverse populations get jobs and change lives. Those with little or no understanding of diversity don't do either.

Consider: Both public and private schools are becoming increasingly diverse. All data indicates that American schools are becoming majority-minority institutions. *How can we ignore this fact and send well-intentioned but culturally stunted teachers into our schools?*

All school data tells us that the most crucial variable effecting student achievement (within the control of school systems) is the quality of the classroom teacher. The second most crucial variable is the quality of the school administrator. *How can we expect these key people to be successful with student populations whose cultures and world view differ significantly from theirs?*

Quality teaching requires effective relationship-building. We are all products of the cultures into which we are born. The culture of success, poverty, and achievement is impacted by our personal, cultural contexts. We preach to our budding teachers that "your students won't care how much you know until they know how much you care." In other words, until one knows and understands the children one teaches, their achievement will be less than stellar. *How can our educators build relationships with their students without understanding the diversity of cultures they represent?*

In sum, **should this course be an option? Only if diversity is an option.**

Since that is not the case, I urge you to avoid enacting this change.

All the best,

David Samore, Ed.D, Principal, Okechee Middle School
2015 Florida Principal of the Year (NASSP)



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ROBERT W. RUNCIE
Superintendent of Schools

January 4, 2016

Dear Dean Bristol:

We are disappointed to learn that the Department of Teaching and Learning has decided to make the required course EDF 3610 – Education in a Multicultural Society optional in the elementary teacher preparation program. Such a change in program content represents a significant shift in the potential preparation of pre-service teachers to better serve the needs of historically under-served groups in our community. These groups make up the majority of our student population and the existence of the so-called “academic gap” speaks to the recognition that teachers are currently able to serve some student populations, but not others. A course such as this alerts teachers to the long-standing opportunity debt that occurs within the education system and better prepares teachers to reverse or at least slow down this trend.

The importance of explicitly and effectively addressing issues pertaining to diversity, is central to the work of the Dillard Innovation Zone of thirteen Title 1 schools and is central to our partnership with Florida Atlantic University in the Minority Success Teacher Academy. In this grant funded program, we are excited to partner with the faculty in multicultural education to provide graduate level instruction in curriculum development, pedagogy and community partnerships that will better serve our teachers’ in their implementation of culturally responsive curriculum and instruction in the STEM-related content areas. Our partnership focuses on graduate level course credit, and we are very aware of how our teachers would have benefited from exposure to this content in their initial teacher preparation program.

While we support all efforts to improve the quality of teacher preparation, we are concerned about the impact that a reduction in the emphasis on critical multiculturalism, equity and social justice might have on future teachers. EDF 3610 represents a crucial course that guides teachers on how to buffer the negative impact of policies and practices that have adversely impacted children of color, immigrants and students from economically impoverished communities. We certainly hope that the faculty and leaders in the College of Education will find a way to retain this important course as a requirement in the program.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Best wishes,

Angela Brown
Principal

Broward County Principal of the Year (2015)

Christopher Gates
Technology Specialist
Dillard Zone Male Task Force Ambassador



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Bilingual/ESOL Department
Victoria Saldala, Director
www.browardschools.com

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ROBERT W. RUNCIE
Superintendent of Schools

December 22, 2015

Dr. Valerie J. Bristol, Dean
College of Education
Florida Atlantic University
777 Glades Road, ED 215
Boca Raton, Florida 33431

Dear Dean Bristol,

I write to you on behalf of the ESOL/Bilingual Department of Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) regarding the decision to make the required multicultural course (EDF 3610 – Education in a Multicultural Society) optional in your teacher preparation program. As a school district that employs many teachers who are graduates of your teacher preparation program, it is of great concern to hear that your preservice teachers will no longer be required to learn about issues of race, diversity and culture in the classroom. This is an area that continues to be crucial in these teachers' professional development and necessary for the social, emotional, and academic success of our culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) K-12 student population.

BCPS serves a CLD student population, 49% of who are Black, Asian, Native American/Native Alaskan, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or multi-racial students and 13% of who are English language learners. Those proportions will increase in the future. A course such as EDF 3610 alerts teachers to the systematic racial and social inequities in society and in the educational system and better prepares teachers to support the unique needs of these historically under-served students in our schools. Currently, there is a significant "academic achievement gap" between Black and Latino students when compared with their White and Asian peers in districts across Florida, including in BCPS. Diminishing future teachers' training in diversity issues and multicultural education will not contribute to the narrowing of that gap.

While we support the move to integrate more content courses into the undergraduate Elementary Education program at FAU, we do not believe that this integration should be done at the expense of multicultural education courses. Designating these relevant and necessary classes as electives or diminishing their number of credits (and thus their importance in your program) will not help FAU graduates to be adequately prepared to serve the CLD students in our district. Moreover, this would represent a significant step backward in FAU's historical leadership in multicultural education, given that you have required these courses in your program since 1989.

We appreciate your time and attention in this matter. We value the strong relationship between BCPS and Florida Atlantic University and trust that you will give serious thought to our concern.

Sincerely,

Victoria B. Saldala
Director



FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY

December 15, 2015

Dr. Valerie Bristor, Dean
College of Education
Florida Atlantic University
Boca Raton, FL 33431

Dear Dean Bristor,

During the past six months, I have become increasingly concerned about the reduction of multicultural education course requirements for pre-service teachers in the College of Education of FAU. From my perspective, the knowledge gained from these courses prepares teachers to reflect critically on the ways in which their own prejudices inform their teaching. I am convinced that these intellectual experiences for preservice teachers are essential to developing teachers in all subject areas who are able to uphold the dignity of all people. In my roles as Director of the Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education, as an historian of Twentieth Century Germany, and as a human rights educator, I have been responsible for in-service teacher professional development on the range of issues related to the content and pedagogy of genocide. There is no question that unreflected-on prejudices play a central role in the science and technology of mass murder.

Our Center has sponsored at least three professional development workshops and two Summer Institutes during the past ten years exploring the relationship between science and human rights abuses, the most recent in 2013. In these workshops we examined the role of German scientists' unquestioned prejudices toward Jews, immigrants, the mentally ill and disabled as well as homosexuals in the application of their research to the processes of mass murder during World War II. We prepared science and social studies teachers to understand that the Eugenics Movement, which was considered a serious branch of scientific inquiry in the United States, conducted research that sought to solve the nation's problems by ridding society of "inferior racial traits." As outrageous as it may sound, this research was used in 1924 to justify passage of a sweeping immigration reform bill limiting the number of immigrants from, in the language

Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education, College of Education

777 Glades Road, Boca Raton, FL 33431

Tel: 561.297.2929 • fax: 561.297.2021 • rgatens@fau.edu • www.fau.edu

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Gatens to Bristor
December 15, 2015
Page 2

of Eugenics, peoples considered “racially inferior.” I can’t help thinking of the point made by biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling that “scientists peer through the prism of everyday culture,” when developing their research questions, designing their experiments and interpreting their results. As she also points out, “more often than not [scientists’] hidden agendas, non-conscious and thus unarticulated, bear strong resemblances to broader social agendas” that promote inequality.

Our workshops and institutes demonstrate to teachers that through multicultural lenses, we can teach students to become aware of the role of prejudice in scientific research and its dehumanizing applications. We have intentionally included elementary school teachers in this kind of work. In 2004 the Center began working with Melaleuca Elementary School in West Palm Beach to develop and perfect a human rights curriculum that crossed all grade levels and subject areas including science and mathematics. This curriculum continues to be used and updated, not only at Melaleuca but in other elementary schools as well.

Though many of the teachers with whom we work have some knowledge of the Holocaust, some knowledge of one of the science areas, and some knowledge about the nature and adverse consequences of prejudice, those who teach at the elementary level, especially, rarely understand how to connect these three subject areas in their mandated Holocaust instruction, and very few understand how to teach these subjects in an integrated way. Because of the assistance of the multicultural and TESOL faculty in CCEI we have been able to send our teachers back to the classroom with pedagogical practices that significantly improve their classroom instruction, especially those associated with teaching the culturally diverse students who attend public school in southeastern Florida.

Teachers, especially elementary level teachers, have often commented in our feed-back surveys that the multicultural practices that they learned in our programs strengthened their teaching in all subject areas, including math and science. They have also lamented that they only marginally learned multicultural approaches when they were teacher education majors.

I value highly my CCEI colleagues in the multicultural education program as they work in partnership with their students to understand their own biases and prejudices and to understand how these biases and prejudices, as well as those embedded in school culture, adversely affect student learning. I have seen my colleagues in action when I observed them teaching the topics of homosexuality, gender and genocide in EDF 3610. Not only did my colleagues model the behavior that they were teaching, they were able to engage their students in practicing open, participatory discussion competently and confidently. This combination of practice and reflection on practice is essential for developing good teaching once students become the leaders of their own classes.

Very little of this knowledge is intuitive, but this knowledge is essential for effective teaching of students from all backgrounds. This is why I am profoundly convinced that a separate course like EDF 3610 is so important for preparing rising generations of students, K-12, in all subjects, including the STEM subjects, actively to uphold the dignity of all people, both as professionals and as citizens.

Gatens to Bristor
December 15, 2015
Page 3

As you may remember, in the wake of the Trayvon Martin killing, the Center, with the assistance of CCEI multicultural faculty conducted a two-day retreat on the topic of “Teaching and Talking about Racism in the Classroom.” Today in the current climate of xenophobia, racism and islamophobia, the Center, with the assistance of these same CCEI faculty, is planning for a June 2016 retreat to prepare teachers to address these issues during the Fall 2016 presidential campaign. I firmly believe that sustaining democracy depends on great leaders. I firmly believe that such leaders are born through their teachers’ ability to teach humanity and to navigate the difficult terrain of topics such as racism, sexism and xenophobia that occur spontaneously in the everyday life of our nation. I am convinced that the vulgarity and disrespect of the current political season, as well as social movements such as the Dream movement and Black Lives Matter underscore just how much our nation needs to ensure that teachers as agents of hope can, in all subject matter, provide antidotes against this tide of blatant, selfish dehumanization.

Please, as leader of the FAU College of Education, ensure that all our preservice teachers are thoroughly exposed to the insights and practices of multicultural education by retaining EDF 3610 as well as EDF 2085.

Thank you for this opportunity to share my concerns.

Cordially,

Rosanna Gatens, Ph.D.
Instructor on Assignment
Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education

C: Dr. Emery Hyslop-Margison, Chair, CCEI

Why do we need TWO courses in multicultural education?

1. Many of our students enter the program with deficit perspectives about difference, and/or proud to be “color blind” and ignore differences. Many are fearful of being “the only White” in a school predominantly of color where they do their placements. We have to take them from this entry point to being advocates for their students through culturally responsive pedagogy that interrupts the deficit orientations of current policy and practice. Two courses are hardly enough.
2. The two courses have always been conceptually distinct with EDF 2085 focused on curriculum development and school-/ classroom-based issues and EDF 3610 focused on social and historical issues.
3. The upper division course (EDF 3610) has served as a demonstration of our commitment to diversity, ensuring that students are prepared for the classroom context in which they will work. It is the only course that all Elementary Education majors take as EDF 2085 is also offered in State Colleges.

EDF 2085	Overlap	EDF 3610
<p>Foundation to subsequent methods courses</p> <p>Developing multicultural curriculum, especially in the content areas, including STEM. Multiculturalism in instruction, assessment and community building explored. Different aspects of diversity and their manifestation in curriculum explored.</p> <p>Field work (15 hours) in diverse setting and cultural profile facilitate critical self reflection</p> <p>CA: Development of curriculum with research-based content (rather than a focus on “procedures”) accompanied by a theoretical justification of their curricular choices.</p>	<p>Philosophical Framework: <i>Critical</i> Multiculturalism as opposed to liberal or tokenistic perspectives. This means a focus on structural/ institutional discrimination and analysis based on power, rather than a focus solely on cultural difference.</p> <p>Difference is defined broadly and inclusively.</p>	<p>The only course focused on diversity that <u>all</u> students take. The only course that addresses global education (pertinent considering national origin of students.)</p> <p>Focus on historical and social dimensions, particularly legal and policy and their implications within education. Address individual and institutional/structural discrimination and advocacy with reference to: immigration/xenophobia, racism, classism, sexism, homophobia, religious diversity and ableism.</p> <p>CA: Analysis of a problem related to social injustice, tracing its historical dimensions and its contemporary educational implications.</p>

In Support of Multiculturalism and Content Area Proficiency: A Summary of Concerns

The achievement gap that exists between students of different racial groups is an outcome traced to teachers' inability to teach students of different groups equitably. Poor STEM education will result in equally poor performance across all races. The achievement gap is a function of structural inequalities perpetuated through policies and practices such as excessive standardized testing and accountability metrics. Successful education of students of diverse backgrounds is achieved through culturally responsive pedagogy/multicultural education. The decision to make one of two multicultural courses an elective is based solely on the need to create curricular space for new content courses proposed in the EXCEED grant.

The current EXCEED grant proposal significantly re-shapes the elementary teacher preparation program to remediate lower division content deficiencies because of students' poor performance on new subject area tests. The proposal will potentially eliminate 17 sections of undergraduate multicultural courses each year. (About 8 sections in Fall/ Spring). The compromise solution leaves EDF 2085 as the only course in multicultural education [versus this course as the pre-requisite course for students who choose to take EDF 3610]. Based on experiences, the very students who most need EDF 3610 will likely shy away from this academic challenge. EDF 3610 is the only course in the Elementary Ed program to address institutional/ structural discrimination in education, as well as globalization (central to understanding migration). Current instruction in the TSL 4081 is based on knowledge, skills and attitudes developed in EDF 3610.

This current EXCEED grant decision further undermines CCEI's contribution to FAU's strategic plan, especially the platforms of Diversity; Undergraduate Research and Inquiry; Peace, Justice and Human Rights; and Global Perspectives and Participation. It calls into question the COE's professed commitment to Diversity as exemplified in the claims made to CAEP.

At a time when racism is on the rise in the USA and when FAU is undergoing significant public scrutiny for how professors use/ abuse their scholarship in the service of the public good, it is important that we recognize our moral obligations as scholars in the service of our diverse communities. The proposal to make EDF 3610 an elective does not represent the interests of our service community.

We are asking our colleagues to make a decision based on sound scholarship, conceptual strength and the public good. The CCEI faculty helped to develop the conceptualization of diversity that was commended in the CAEP visit as rising to the level of a "national exemplar." Making EDF 3610 optional calls into question the COE's commitment to students of color being recruited. CCEI has done well to attract promising scholars to the college based on the claim of intellectual openness to multiculturalism. Therefore we are asking for the opportunity to identify ways in which this important course may remain as a requirement in the teacher preparation program, whose graduates will teach our own children of diverse backgrounds.

PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS' STATEMENTS ON DIVERSITY

National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Position

What is required to create, support, and sustain a culture of access and equity in the teaching and learning of mathematics?

Creating, supporting, and sustaining a culture of access and equity require being responsive to students' backgrounds, experiences, cultural perspectives, traditions, and knowledge when designing and implementing a mathematics program and assessing its effectiveness.

Providing all students with access is not enough; educators must have the knowledge, skills, and disposition necessary to support effective, equitable mathematics teaching and learning.

<http://www.nctm.org/Standards-and-Positions/Position-Statements/Access-and-Equity-in-Mathematics-Education/>

National Teachers of Science Education (NTSE) Declarations on Multicultural Science Education (2000)

Children from all cultures are to have equitable access to quality science education experiences that enhance success and provide the knowledge and opportunities required for them to become successful participants in our democratic society;

2015 National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE) Education Policy Platform

"Literacy is foundational to education, to work, and to civic life. A failure to develop these abilities in every learner has consequences that reverberate at every level of society.

Two principles must guide all decisions affecting literacy education: ***First, decisions must be informed by solid research, not merely by ideology or political expediency.*** Second, the needs and interests of all learners—early childhood through university—must guide our efforts.

NAEYC Position on Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

<https://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSDIV98.PDF>

"Administrative support for bilingualism as a goal is necessary within the educational setting.

Educational practices should focus on educating children toward the "school culture" while preserving and respecting the diversity of the home language and culture that each child brings to the early learning setting. Early childhood professionals and families must work together to achieve high quality care and education for all children."

-Accept the legitimacy of children's home language, respect (hold in high regard) and value (esteem, appreciate) the home culture

- Promote and encourage the active involvement and support of all families

National/International TESOL position on Opposing Bullying, Harassment, and Hate Crimes (March 2009)

"There is increasing global concern over verbal and/or physical attacks against those who are perceived as different from the majority... TESOL strongly opposes bullying, harassment, and hate crimes...

TESOL supports

- Development of educational practices by TESOL professionals to assist students and scholars experiencing bullying, harassment, and hate crimes
- Development of educational practices by TESOL professionals to teach majority- group members the value of diversity and of the human and civil rights of minorities

We also contend that this responsibility also falls on all educators serving minority children in the public schools.

NCTE Statement on Anti-Racism to Support Teaching and Learning (2007)

The NCTE Committee on Racism and Bias in the Teaching of English works toward positive communication and the promotion of social justice in access to and delivery of public education. In order to ensure that all individuals have access to public education that is free of racism, bias, and prejudice and to support the intellectual development and growth of students from early childhood education levels to university studies (Pre-Kindergarten through 16), the NCTE Committee on Racism and Bias in the Teaching of English recommends that English language arts educators: Actively identify and challenge individual or systemic acts of racism, bias, and prejudice in educational institutions and within our profession, exposing such acts through external communication and publications

Reflections on learning - Quotes from our students about their 3610 experiences¹

In my own educational journey, I do not feel like I received an education that was nearly so thorough or representative of different groups in all my twelve years of public schooling as I have in two semesters worth of Diversity and Multicultural Education classes. I think that is an injustice in and of itself. I think that it is absolutely unacceptable that the only classes where I learn a significant amount of relevant information about multicultural pedagogy is *contained in and only in* classes specifically designed for the purpose of those subjects.

I am prepared to enter my future classroom now, understanding the role of multicultural education in my curriculum. I will have such a wide range of students, and now I feel ready to teach from all of their perspectives. I will make education as relevant as is humanly possible to all of my students. ... This class has left me extraordinarily motivated to try to make my students the most compassionate, empathetic people that they can be, which I think a multicultural education ultimately fosters.

This class has prepared me to walk into my classroom completely open-minded. It has prepared me to expect a classroom of diverse students who will all learn in different ways.

A critical turning point in this class for me was the feedback I was receiving on my reflection papers. You as the teacher went into depth and asked more about my statements gave me the ability to push myself to find those answers, critique them, and search beyond what was asked to know I am giving the best possible answer there is to find. This class took me out of my comfort level that I have never experienced before from any other class, where I was given work and told to do it. This class requires critical thinking in everything we have discussed and you wouldn't take anything else.

I felt as though the atmosphere of the classroom was one of mutual respect between teacher and student, the readings and discussions presented in the class were unlike anything I have experienced in any classroom before, and I feel like I have learned more as a result of the unique structure of the class. This experience has also taught me that education is not only learning the material, it also includes utilizing and applying the knowledge in a critical and constructive way. This additional objective to the learning process is even more important to us as future teachers: our objective as teachers should not just be to teach material and make good test-takers, but to teach our children through multiple perspectives in the hopes they become thoughtful, critical citizens.

I will credit this class with forcing me to think outside of my own frame of reference and helped me to gain the ability to understand why people are the way they are as well as some of the things that contribute to the pressures that people feel. To me that is the definition of multicultural education: the ability to understand and reach out to people who are different than you. ... I really enjoyed the discussion on sexuality because we were able to talk about things that are still considered to be taboo in many circles in a way that was not offensive to anyone but still raised the issues facing the LGBT community.

One of the significant turning points in my educational journey was when I learned through our discussions that though my education might have been with a diverse group of people it was not multicultural because we were still being taught the same old curriculum. Students, myself included, were taught that the White European perspective was the only acceptable perspective. We blindly followed along because we wanted to succeed. [An African American student]

In the six weeks that I have been taking this class, I learned more about the history of America than I did in my yearlong high school social studies class.

My first encounter with Multicultural education was this summer. It was mind-mangling to learn the different experience that people of color went through, such as the Native Americans, African Americans and Latin Americans. There were times I left the classroom questioning why God allows these things to happen. Part of the six week course I felt that I was going to burst with excitement.

The role of this class has been a critical part of preparation for teaching students of diverse cultures. Without this class I would not have known the disastrous effects of globalization, the implication and importance of critical pedagogy, and the true significance of multicultural education. Without being informed on the negative effects of globalization, students will continue to consume and waste, taking for granted material that does not come so easily to the adults and children in other countries. Without the implication of critical pedagogy, students would merely be robots, spitting information when instructed to and not having an actual opinion. Without the influence of multicultural education in the classroom, students in the United States would learn only from the White, Middle class perspective, never even dawning on them how other cultures felt about how we treated them in U.S. History, and going on in life thinking the American culture is superior. This class has surely provided us with the right tools to be able to provide a positive learning environment for our students, one that includes multicultural education and Critical Pedagogy. ... Without this class I would have been truly blinded and confused as a teacher only teaching from the White perspective and most likely accidentally spreading the wrong message to students that the White Americans are superior and that the American culture is superior. This, according to Koppelman (2014), is called the “hidden curriculum” (p. 337).

From day one of this Multicultural course, I wasn't really sure as to why it was required that I take this course for my degree. To me, a multicultural classroom solely meant there was diversity among ethnic backgrounds in the classroom. A multicultural education meant exploring different cultures maybe once throughout the academic school year, such as, African American's history during Black history month. I didn't really see the point of having an entire course about it. Little did I know at the time that I was so naive when it came to what multiculturalism really meant... I knew that this course was going to require me to be open minded with some of the topics being discussed. With that being said I was confident in my beliefs and points of views regardless as to what anyone said. I knew there would be opposing views and beliefs, but there was no changing me. Boy did I get slapped with a reality check. The course allowed for me to rethink as to why I believed what I believed, and what shaped and formed me into the person I am today. A majority of one's beliefs and viewpoints are a result of the environment and experiences one has gone through. I never once bothered to explore or educate myself on beliefs or viewpoints that opposed my own. Thankfully this course allowed for me to gain understandings of others and required me to think outside of my personal comfort zone. The course allowed for me to open my mind and hear what others have to say whether I agreed or not.

Multicultural education is essential for every student. Its importance and principles should be presented to all educators to provide justice. This class has greatly impacted me and the fact that I can apply these same concepts to my classroom is wonderful. I view the world in a different light now and I am constantly challenged to be globally conscious, to think about ways that I can serve justice as an educator, student and citizen.

I used to be one with a passive attitude, living by the philosophy that everything would eventually work itself out and I would avoid issues talked about on the news, but I have learned that if I continue with that attitude then things such as the house bill against the MAS program will continue to happen and there will never be a change... I learned a great deal when we covered information regarding race and oppression. We explored the hardships and history of the Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Hispanic Americans. I was enlightened about the struggles that these groups faced that are not talked about in the regular school curriculum. ... Again, if it wasn't for this class or for multicultural education people would continue to be uninformed, like I was, about the history of this country ... All in all, I believe that the goal to experience teaching and learning in the way that all students in public education should have been achieved for me. Nieto stated that “one has to be a multicultural person before one can be a multicultural teacher.” Completing this course has contributed to me becoming a more multicultural person and a more conscious person as well.

The article “*From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in the U.S. Schools*” opened my eyes to why there is a racial achievement gap, how it unfairly constructs students as imperfect and lacking, and how it cautions students of color to catch up. It tells the readers why it is important to re-frame the current discussions about the “achievement gap” in term of an “educational debt.” Reframing of the gap as a debt insisted on a recognition of the historical and contemporary institutional racism of schooling. Calling to re-frame the gap around the effects of structural racism and examine the accountability of schools and schooling systems as a factor of racial inequity, however, have gone largely unheeded from what I understood thus far. Instead, the majority of national education reform efforts insist on

additional academic and behavioral efforts on the part of teachers and students as the most effective means of students of color. Looking back, achievement gap refers to the disparities in standardized test scores between Black and White, Latino and White and all other recent immigrant and White students. Educational debt, on the other hand, is the foregone schooling resources that we could have or should have been investing in primarily towards low income kids, which deficit leads to a variety of social problems such as crime, low productivity, low wages, and low labor force participation that requires an ongoing public investment.

1. Note: These are comments from a single class from a six-week summer 2015 section. We have similar responses from other sections with diverse instructors. This is merely a “snapshot” of the collective experience in the words of our students.