



Teacher Educator Convening White Paper
Executive Summary
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Overview of the CRTWC Teacher Educator Convening

The Center for Reaching & Teaching the Whole Child (CRTWC) began as an embedded project within the SJSU Department of Elementary Education. Its goal was to respond to the compelling research on social-emotional learning (SEL). From 2009-2016, CRTWC focused on working with faculty, university supervisors, and cooperating teachers in the SJSU Multiple Subject Credential program with the intention of building their understanding of the social-emotional dimensions of teaching and learning (SEDTL), the critical connection between SEDTL and academic achievement, and their ability to integrate SEDTL into teacher preparation course content and field experiences.

In June 2016, CRTWC invited a group that included California university teacher educators, researchers with a demonstrated understanding of, and commitment to SEL, and teacher educators who are responding to new SEL standards in states throughout the nation. Our intent was to have these fifteen participants engage in a facilitated discussion about essential next steps needed to bring SEDTL into pre-service teacher education systematically and systemically.

The TE Convening was to serve as a “kick-start” to ongoing professional learning among the participants rather than as a one-time “coming together” to discuss ideas. The stated goals of the Teacher Educator Convening included the following:

- Bring together thought leaders who teach, supervise, and support teacher preparation programs in California and other states to listen to what they see as the needs, challenges, and opportunities of integrating social-emotional learning skills at the pre-service level.
- Share what is currently happening in the professional homes of the participants.
- Develop explicit actionable next steps participants will take to connect the social-emotional dimensions of teaching and learning and culturally responsive teaching in pre-service teacher education.

Connecting SEL and Culturally Responsive Teaching

During the guided discussion, the need to be able to clearly articulate the integration of Culturally Responsive Teaching with SEL kept emerging as a crucial component needed in teacher preparation. Participants strongly supported the importance of reframing the current SEL dialogue so that CRT and SEDTL are seen as two sides of the same coin, rather than as “siloed” competencies in pre-service programs (sometimes literally in separate courses).

Participants noted that a challenge of acquiring a SEDTL/CRT lens includes agreeing on a common language between CRT and SEDTL, and agreeing on what needs to be taught in teacher preparation courses to help candidates develop this combined lens. It became clear that there is the need for teacher preparation programs to develop a common SEDTL/CRT language and a series of SEDTL/CRT integrated strategies as they prepare new teachers for a vastly more diverse student population in today’s schools. This combined SEDTL/CRT lens will move new teachers to develop cultural competence in themselves, and communicate this competence to their students.

Issues that need to be addressed to bring the SEDTL/CRT Lens into Teacher Preparation

Agreement on what is meant by SEL: Participants discussed the need for defining social-emotional learning; for sharing the research connecting SEL with academic achievement and students’ ability to thrive; and for exploring how the SEDTL/CRT lens can be operationalized in teacher preparation programs. There was agreement that in many places, SEL is still seen as “fluff”, something to add on if there is time (which there never is), but not a priority. Because it is sometimes equated with mindfulness practice, some educators view it as having religious overtones and therefore, are hesitant to attend to it in courses or the elementary classroom.

Faculty support: University faculty and administrators need to be provided with opportunities to understand both the importance of integrating development of candidates’ SEDTL/CRT lens and practices into their courses, and a roadmap for doing so. This includes the need to plan how to integrate SEDTL/CRT within the existing curriculum and to understand the concept of SEDTL/CRT as a lens through which a teacher makes decisions. A crucial component of this integration is the need to identify a set of SEDTL/CRT competencies to guide this work.

Recognizing and addressing work culture issues: Additionally, there is the issue of the university culture,

which is grounded in an individualistic approach to education. Faculty are not necessarily expected to consult with one another to ensure that there is consistency across courses related to content. So, the need to have coherence regarding program goals, content, activities, and assessments can be challenged by the expectation of academic freedom to teach as one chooses.

Actionable Next Steps

At the end of the day, participants were asked to suggest any next steps we as a group, and they as individuals working in the field of teacher preparation, could take to move this work forward. The following ideas were suggested:

- Decide on a common language - All those who work with teacher candidates in a given institution must share a common language and a combined SEDTL/CRT lens. This understanding must be evident across courses and fieldwork.
- Establish a means for internal communication that involves all of the players - Teacher preparation programs need explicit strategies that encourage communication among all the stakeholders. This includes faculty who teach the courses, university supervisors who observe teacher candidates in the field, and cooperating teachers who mentor the teacher candidates.
- Integrate SEDTL/CRT in all content area instruction - Teacher educators need to ensure that the SEDTL/CRT lens informs the teaching of content areas. To do so, faculty and university supervisors need many concrete examples of what assignments, assessments, and activities look like in practice within different content areas.
- Understand and teach how the new research in the neurosciences must inform how teachers' work with students and the strategies they need to learn, both to support their own SEL competencies and those of their students.
- View SEDTL/CRT as a lens with practices that support it - Participants agreed that the development of this "lens" requires many opportunities to study and respond to videos of practice and written teaching cases.
- Treat the development of an SEDTL/CRT lens as an integral part of instructional practice rather than as an "add-on".
- Teach candidates specific, intentional strategies for developing productive teacher/student relationships that foster academic growth and students' ability to thrive.
- Address and provide strategies for teacher candidates to develop their own and students' SEL skills with consideration of social, political, and cultural contexts.
- Create and provide methods to assess how students and the teacher candidates are progressing in their SEL skill development.

Programmatic suggestions included the need to:

- Be explicit
- Provide multiple opportunities for modeling, practice, feedback, and reflection across the program
- Pay attention to program structure as well as individual course content
- Provide adequate resources

In order to help teacher preparation move toward the above, CRTWC proposed a yearlong Institute for teacher educators from universities across California and the nation where they will be provided with a framework that uses a combined SEDTL/CRT lens; resources developed by CRTWC with other institutions to support the integration of SEDTL/CRT into K-8 teacher preparation; and practice activities to develop faculty's ability to use an SEDTL/CRT lens to guide their teaching and to add this lens to their programs.

Final Thoughts

There is an urgent need to prepare teacher candidates who know how to develop culturally and linguistically diverse children's capacity to understand and use SEL skills and competencies as they face ever-increasing stress and expectations in a rapidly changing world. However, we have only just begun to seriously explore the need to connect the social-emotional dimensions of teaching and learning (SEDTL) to the development of culturally competent teachers. The discussion at the Convening surfaced a passionate response from teacher educators about the need to explicitly engage in this work.