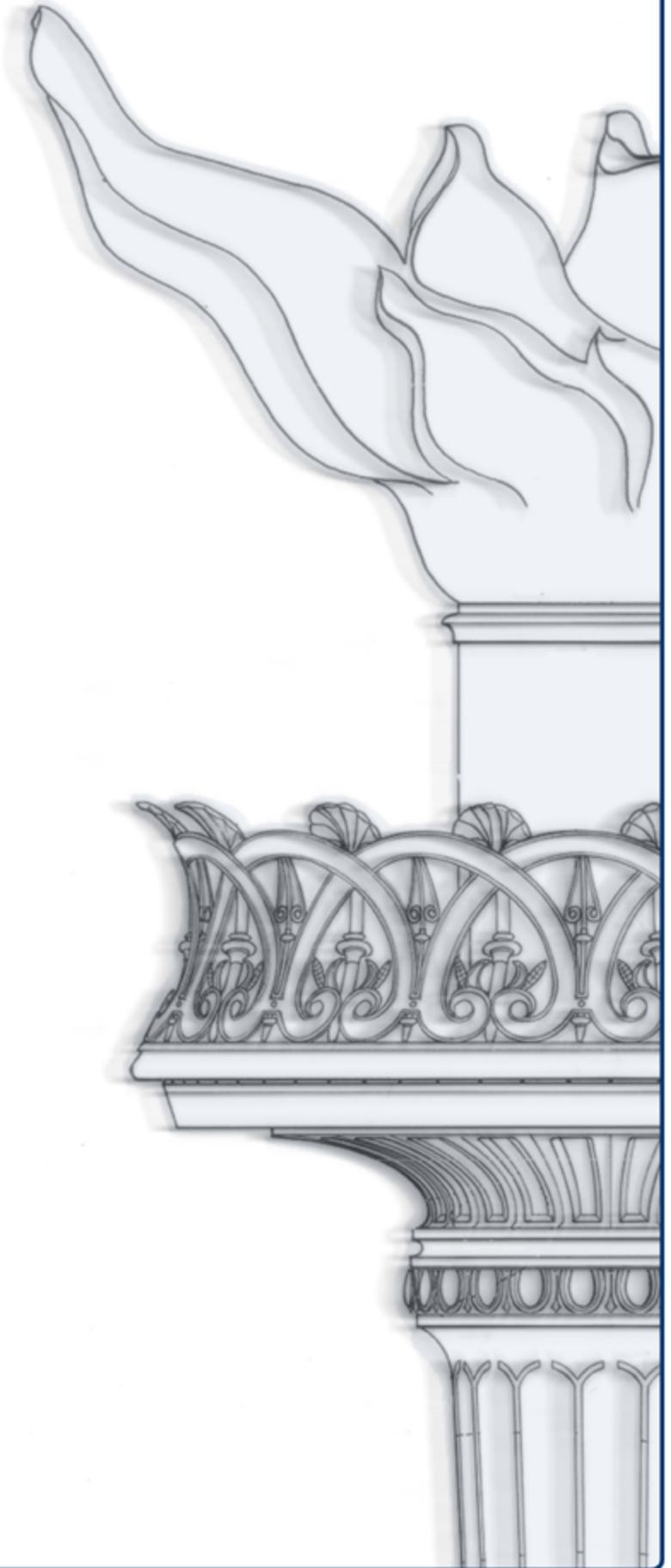


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Texas Association of College Teachers
Defending Academic Freedom
Volume LXVII Number 3



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January/February/March 2014

The TACT Quarterly eBulletin

January/February/March 2014 - Volume LXVII Number 3

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President's Column

by Cindy Simpson
TACT President

In preparing this article, I stopped counting when the number of benefits from TACT I listed pushed into the double digits. I'm a big believer in the Rule of Three, because any more than that are quickly forgotten. If this is close to your list, maybe you could share it with a colleague like I do regularly. And maybe I'll continue my list in future issues.

1. **Legislative Representation:** Every profession deserves to have its message and best interests communicated to legislators and other policy-makers. "No problem," you say, "I pay dues to the Texas Association of Left-Handed Literary Physics Sociologists, so I'm a joiner!" We should all participate in one or more of our disciplinary societies, but do those folks advocate for greater higher ed appropriations (think salaries), more scholarship funding (think more students and funds to campuses) or healthy retirement benefits (ORP is not a top-ten most recognized acronym in the hallowed halls). We hire a registered lobbyist.

2. **Continuing Education:** Again, not current developments in the subject matter you teach, but the fact that we all toil in universities. This publication and the semi-annual Leadership Conferences (open to all members) bring us together to discuss challenges and solutions to governance, tenure and academic freedom issues. If we are not on the lookout for quality of employment issues, who is?

3. **Career Protection Insurance:** Approximately one-third of your dues buys Educators Professional Liability Insurance. Is it a waste of money? LET'S HOPE SO! Legal issues can be career-destroying, family-wrenching, health-endangering events. So can house fires and I don't agonize over writing that check. Thanks to our group buying power, it's the best thirteen cents I spend every day.

An interesting aside: Senator and Gubernatorial Candidate Wendy Davis announced the other day that she favors open carry of firearms. Whatever the political and policy motivations might be, it was she who first told our lobbyist that campus carry would not pass the Senate. This was as he was visiting each of the 31 Senators' offices in what looked then (and every legislative session) like an uphill battle. As we continue to lead the effort to keep a revolver out of the backpack of that overly-caffeinated wacko in the front row, we must presume that she doesn't intend for holsters in our classrooms.

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Executive Director's Report

by **Chuck Hempstead**
TACT Executive Director



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Two years ago, we were discussing the impending radical turnover in the Texas House of Representatives. This time we turn to the Senate.

With the governor-for-life moving on, the bottleneck of Republican career ambitions has been uncorked. The orderly ladder of succession has been toppled. One senator is running Governor. Another is running for Lt. Governor against a vulnerable incumbent in the primary, while another is a shoe-in for the other primary. The chair of Senate Appropriations has resigned. Another is rumored for a high level appointment in higher education. Another is running for Comptroller. And not one of these candidates has forgotten that the last major election – for U.S. Senate – was won by the more conservative, tea party darling.

So TACT is reacting by changing our strategy for the February 28 semi-annual legislative visits. Thanks to a much larger than usual TACT leadership participation, we are trying something different. Usually OUR leadership meets with THEIR leadership, or at least the staff. This time we're thinking more broadly (I'm trying to avoid the rifle shot/shotgun blast analogy due to our guns on campus plank). We will meet with more of the elected officials from the districts represented by our state board members. First, when constituents show up, it gets their attention. Second, we don't know who will have Senate committee leadership positions a year from now.

Wanna join us? Call me, the *TACT Spring Leadership Conference* is February 28th.

Contact us!

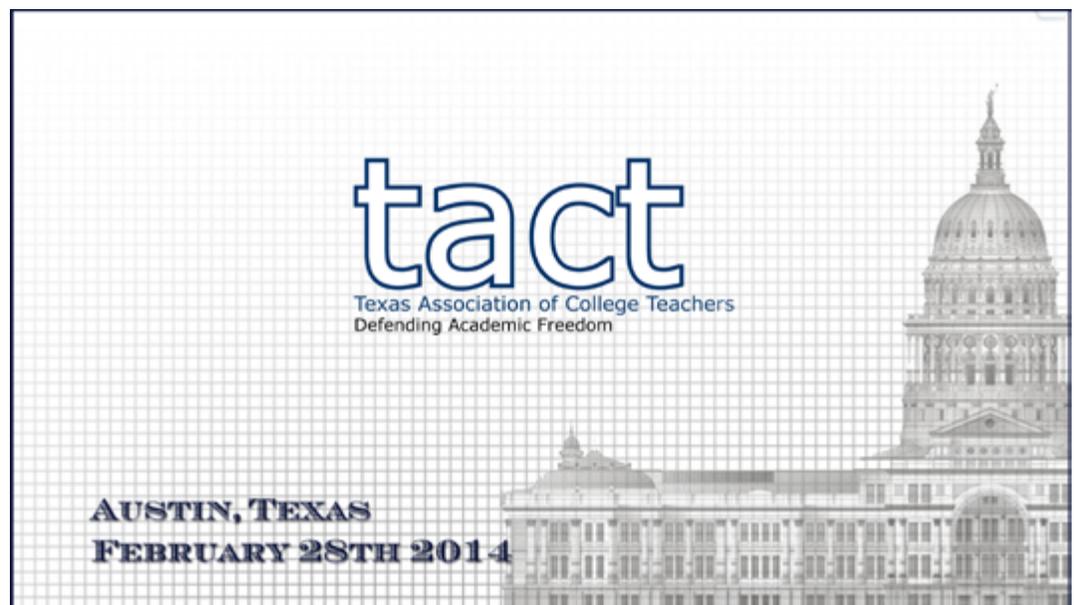
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Developing Strategies and Heart for the Culturally Responsive Classroom

by **Dr. Kaye Busiek, Assistant Professor**
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The number of culturally diverse students in American public schools is rising (Davis & Bauman, 2013), and the academic needs of far too many of these students are not being met (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Consequently, schools need to find ways to prepare curricular and instructional opportunities more effectively for our diverse learners so that more of them can be successful in the future.

Students are highly influenced by their personal characteristics, experiences, challenges, and choices (Howard-Hamilton, 2000). The uniqueness that students bring to the classroom, such as family beliefs and values, form the foundation of how learning will be perceived and processed by them. Teachers who respect the differences in their students (i.e., ethnicity, gender, social class, age, religion, geographical origin, race, sexual orientation, and exceptionality) are better able to meet their learning needs.

Culturally responsive behavior is defined by Gay (2002) as “using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively” (p. 106). According to Wlodkowski and Ginsberg (1995), students’ motivation for learning cannot be separated from their culture. Teachers must avoid taking a neutral stance on the culturally diverse make-up of their classroom and instead embrace ways they can weave relevant aspects of students’ lives (e.g., values, traditions, language, learning styles, and relationship norms) into the fabric of their curriculum and pedagogy.

According to Howard-Hamilton (2000), teachers can be more effective if they limit the use of instructional strategies that focus on more traditional, teacher-directed models of teaching and learning (e.g., lecture, grades, and content mastery), replacing it with student-centered, engaged learning opportunities that are meaningful and respectful of cultural differences. A culturally responsive teacher regularly utilizes four practices: (1) empathy and caring, (2) sincere reflection of their own beliefs about people from cultures other than their own, (3) recognition of their own cultural frame of reference, and (4) knowledge acquisition about other cultures (Rychly & Graves, 2012).

Caring and empathetic teachers develop healthy relationships with their students while holding them to high standards of achievement (Rychly & Graves, 2012). They demonstrate friendliness, warmth, affection, respect, and security in a family-type environment (Brown, 2011). At the same time, culturally responsive teachers are assertive—establishing their authority by clearly stating expectations and consistently enforcing rules and policies. Every student is expected to learn, and underachievement is unacceptable.

In order to respond successfully to the culturally diverse needs of students, teachers need to reflect on their own beliefs about people from other cultures (Rychly & Graves, 2012). Teachers typically ask students to adapt their learning style to fit the

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teacher's instructional style. Tomlinson and Javrus (2012), however, state that teachers should follow the "platinum rule" rather than the "golden rule": *Treat others as they want to be treated*. Teachers would be wise to look first at their instructional resources and practices from the students' perspective. This examination might reveal that traditional practices and material represent to students the highlights and successes of a society to which they cannot relate (Howard-Hamilton, 2000). By continuing to maintain status quo (i.e., refusing to adjust common practices to fit the diverse needs of learners), teachers can perpetuate stereotypes and one-sided thinking rather than create a learning environment that is "psychologically and intellectually liberating" (Gay, 2000, p. 35). Gay (2000) contends that culturally responsive teaching can result in students who are more caring, who better understand their place in the world, who are better able to concentrate on the task at hand, and who feel that knowledge and ideas are to be shared and critiqued.

Once teachers get in touch with their own perceptions and biases about people from other cultures, they must recognize the parameters of their own frame of reference (Rychly & Graves, 2012) or "worldview" (Howard-Hamilton, 2000). Payne (2005) states that teachers bring "hidden rules" into their classrooms. These include certain behavioral and academic practices that make assumptions about what it means to be an effective student and are based primarily on the cultural expectations of the teacher—without regard to the personal or cultural identities of the students. This frame of reference may view students from diverse backgrounds as underachievers who are incapable of achieving at high levels.

Finally, once teachers understand the importance of getting to know the culturally diverse backgrounds of their students, they will need to acquire information that can guide instructional planning, delivery, and assessment. Surveys, questionnaires, and informal discussions can be utilized to learn about students' interests, such as music, art, hobbies, and sports (Rychly & Graves, 2012); their communication styles; their past educational successes and failures; and their learning style preferences (e.g., collaborative rather than independent). Sleeter (2011) suggests that teachers avoid simply learning about such things as the celebrations and traditions of cultures other than their own with no effort to apply that information in the classroom. Rather, they should "teach challenging academic knowledge and skills through cultural processes and knowledge students bring to school with them." (p. 13).

Quality professional development opportunities (i.e., role-playing, field experiences, demonstrations, case studies, and simulations) can provide teachers with the information that is lacking in their teaching repertoire and are most effective when they reach beyond theory by suggesting specific procedures and strategies that are practiced with feedback. In addition, a critically responsive teacher must believe that he or she is capable of making the necessary changes required to respond to the unique needs of his or her students. Bandura (1977) posits that such professional development opportunities must be coupled with "teacher efficacy," which implies the teacher has the belief that he or she can successfully utilize the knowledge and skills to impact student learning with competence and confidence.

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When teachers commit to curriculum and pedagogy that is culturally responsive, “they are able to move forward in ways that respond to the differences instead of holding all classroom participants to their own standards or views” (Rychly & Graves, 2012, p. 48). Howard-Hamilton (2000) contends that teachers may need to incorporate more of the following: cooperative learning, reading selections with a multicultural perspective, and the intentional infusion of diverse opinions and perspectives in class discussions. Tomlinson and Javuis (2012) state that culturally diverse students will benefit when they are allowed to celebrate and showcase their differences, are invited to discuss their similarities, are asked to make meaning in multiple ways, are engaged in rigorous learning opportunities, can make connections to their own lives utilizing authentic products (i.e., letters and projects), can utilize a wide range of resources (i.e., print, audio, video, Internet), and will learn skills for independence and self-direction. It behooves every educator to seriously consider what steps need to be taken in their educational practice so that every student can be engaged in continuous, meaningful learning.

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For nearly 70 years, TACT has been on the front lines of higher education issues in Texas. The GRF assists TACT with a key component of our mission: **communicating TACT's legislative agenda** (viewable [here](#)) in order to improve Texas higher education.

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