**Notes from Cory Gann**

“Power of Diversity”

**Goes to Education Conferences**

The “Increasing Ethnic Diversity” initiative has had a prominent presence at major conferences in the Puget Sound area. One of the best ways to spark interest and get the word out about teacher education is to become visible at these gatherings of education stakeholders. With the support of the Verizon Foundation, we have been able to create vendor table displays that advertise the vital importance of diversity in teacher education, the necessary appeal for great teachers of color in our schools, and the commitment of CWU’s Teacher Education Program towards attracting a diverse cohort of student teachers. Tables and materials were displayed throughout the Washington Association for the Education of Young Children Conference at the Meydenbauer Center in Bellevue, and at the Washington Association for Multicultural Education at North Seattle Community College. Especially gratifying was the fact that these display tables were staffed by current education students in the Des Moines Program. There could not be better ambassadors for teacher education than people who are in the very midst of their studies and field work.

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**CWU Power of Diversity Round Table 2009**

It was a momentous gathering when nine teachers of color, all graduates of the CWU Des Moines Education Program came together for a round table symposium to discuss pedagogy, the career of teaching, and culturally responsive teacher education as part of the “Increasing Ethnic Diversity” project which has been funded by a grant from the Verizon Foundation and the Wells Fargo Foundation. Each of the participants spoke profoundly and eloquently, and brought pride to all of the faculty who have had a part in their development. Topics ranged from *How did you get into teaching* to *Making improvements in the teacher education program* and ultimately the conversation turned to the critical question of *Eurocentric curriculum*. This was a no holds bar meeting on behalf of more inclusive, just, and equitable K-12 communities.

The panel participants had all graduated the CWU Des Moines Center Education Program within the last three years. Each alumni is hard at work in a South Sound school district and has become a valued, successful teacher at the elementary level.

The panel roster was as follows:

- Jay Powell - 5th grade teacher in the Highline School District
- Teresa Ramirez - Kindergarten ELL teacher, Tukwila School District
- Jimmy Nguyen - 3rd-5th Multiage grade teacher, Federal Way School District
- Gail Williams - 2nd-3rd grade Gates Teacher, Federal Way School District
- Megan Brusnighan - 2nd grade teacher, Tukwila
- Michael Signal - 5th grade teacher, Auburn School District
- Carissa Campbell - 4th - 5th Summer School and Literacy in the Community Teacher, Federal Way
- Zak Palsha - Vice Principal, Tukwila Elementary Schools
- Janine Hernandez - Elementary substitute teacher, Renton School District

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One of the highpoints of the roundtable occurred when panelists were asked: How do you show caring for the students of color in your classroom?

It was a moment when each teacher had to think deeply about how cultural responsiveness plays out in the everyday lived experience world of their classrooms. Teresa told a moving story about how she began the year with joyful kindergartners who just were not exhibiting the separation tears of neighboring classrooms. As she put it: "I don't know if it is true, but the fact that I was able to speak Spanish to them seemed to make a difference." Jimmy recounted those times when he was able to go out into the playground and get to know students better: "They might look at me, a Vietnamese-American male teacher, and say 'Hey, that's cool, you're a teacher.'" And Gail painted a vivid picture of how children flock to her room during those down times - "especially African-American girls, and other students of color." Of special value were the recommendations that panelists provided when addressing the key issues of diversity in recruitment and teacher education curriculum. Given the multilingual nature of today's classrooms, there was a commonly held belief that more should be done to encourage conversational language for future teachers (especially Spanish). Secondly, all of these alumni teachers agreed that a mentor system and program was a key missing ingredient in forging the road toward a more diverse teaching community. Each of our graduates seemed willing and excited by the idea of being called upon to provide mentorship for interns and teacher education candidates who represent diverse communities. As always, the trick and the challenge will be to make such mentoring possible through genuine support - both monetary and release time - so that a real commitment in words is backed up by tangible resources.

Spotlight Zak Palsha

Zakariya Salim Palsha was born in Mombasa, Kenya. He was raised in Kenya and Ethiopia and spent a little of his childhood in the Pacific Northwest as well. His father grew up in Edmonds, WA and his mother was born and raised in Kenya. Both of his parents have been involved in education at some point in their lives. His mother is still a 3rd grade teacher in Washington State. His father now works for Boeing as a technical writer. He has one younger brother who is also pursuing a career in education - he is in a certification program thru Central Washington University and is expected to complete his coursework and internship in the Winter of 2010. Mr. Palsha shares his life with his beautiful wife, Dr. Nardin Omar who is currently studying to take the US Medical License Exam to become a licensed physician in the United States.

Mr. Palsha moved to Seattle in June of 2000, after he
graduated from High School. He started his higher education at the University of Washington but eventually transferred to Central Washington University where he completed his BA in Early Childhood Education and Elementary Education. Mr. Palsha then went on to teach 2nd grade at Tukwila Elementary School and under the advisement of his mentor, Steve Salisbury, he enrolled in a principal program the following year.

Mr. Palsha went through the Principal Program at Central Washington University, obtaining his M.Ed in School Administration as well. Now he is currently an Assistant Principal in the Tukwila School District. His duties include: working with three different elementary schools, staffs, and principals, each having their own culture and style. Additionally, he oversees the implementation and evaluation of the Adult Evening Program (partnering with Highline Community College); parents access English classes, computer classes, citizenship classes and GED classes while their children are tutored by high school students who receive a service learning credit. He also oversees various other district programs, grants and budgets; recruits, hires and evaluates teachers and other staff members; and prepares and presents presentations to the Board of Directors. One of his most recent accomplishments was that he was awarded the Community Schools Collaboration "Principal of the Year Award" last school year.

Mr. Palsha is a life long learner. He stated, "I have learned through my experience and efforts that leadership is truly a service role; it is the administrator's duty to provide the environment and atmosphere for staff to succeed and to support teachers in making that 'magic' happen in the classroom. The principal needs to push the school towards excellence and help maintain that excellence."

Mr. Palsha encourages students of color to enroll in an educator preparation program because "we need more role models for our kids. They need to have someone that they interact with everyday that has sat in their shoes before, someone that understands their struggles and can push them to be our future leaders."

Mr. Palsha ended with a quote:

“Globalization, migration, economic integration, communication and travel are bringing different races, cultures and ethnicities into ever closer contact with each other. More than ever before, people understand that they are being shaped by many cultures and influences, and that combining the familiar with the foreign can be a source of powerful knowledge and insight. People can and should take pride in their particular faith or heritage... Clearly, we need to use education to advance tolerance and understanding. Perhaps more than ever, international understanding is essential to world peace — understanding between faiths, between nations, between cultures.”

—Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations

Steve’s Space

I am pleased to introduce myself. My name is Steve Swortz I am currently enrolled in the Teacher Preparation Program at CWU-Des Moines. I am in the evening cohort. Our cohort is very diverse, in fact in our cohort I am one of only three men. The rest of my cohort is a very diverse mixture of women from several different ethnic backgrounds. I started working with the Power of Diversity to help promote the Teacher Preparation Program at CWU. I found out quickly that The Power of Diversity is much more than just a program to promote the Teacher Preparation Program at CWU. It is a way to reach out to a group of people who want to share their special skills and knowledge with the future of America. It is my pleasure to work with The Power of Diversity Team. I am looking forward to sharing the diverse views and message of the importance of multiculturalism with my students.
Melissa's Message

Hello and welcome, my name is Melissa Giannini and I too am in my second quarter of the teacher preparation program here at CWU-Des Moines. Steve and I are fortunate enough to be a part of the evening cohort which is very rich in culture. This not only helps to prepare us for facilitating a diverse classroom of students, but also provides various points of view throughout our studies. We learn so much from one another when we celebrate our multiculturalism.

I also just had the opportunity to represent the Power of Diversity and CWU's elementary education program at Kentridge High School for the Kent-Tahoma Education Fair. We had a great turn out and spoke with many students and parents about the education programs and their opportunities. There were many undecided students of course, but as Cory Gann replied to me, “The seeds are planted”. I am so pleased to be working with the Power of Diversity team in promoting and encouraging diverse teachers. Your story can make all the difference in a child’s life. We cannot expect to reach out to all of our students if we do not make an effort to prepare our teachers for the task. Thank you, to the Power of Diversity team for promoting this powerful and essential message.

Calendar Of Events

Pathways for Native Students
A Conference on Current Issues and Approaches in Washington Colleges & Universities
February 17-18, 2010
Doubletree SeaTac Hotel
Seattle, Washington

The Latino/a Educational Achievement Project
10th Annual Conference and Legislative Day.
February 18 - 20, 2010
Hotel Murano Tacoma

2010 Pacific Northwest Farmworker Summit
March 11 & 12, 2010
Portland, OR 97232
For more information
Contact Ron Hauge
(503) 245-2600 ext. 202
Fax: (503) 245-9602
E-mail: rhauge@ohdc.org

Celebrating Salish 2010
Wednesday, March 10 - Friday, March 12, 2010
Spokane, WA 99001
Northern Quest Resort Casino
For more information contact:
JR Bluff, Kalispel Tribe- jrbluff@kalispeltribe.com
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Chris Parkin,
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Save The Date!!!
Power of Diversity at CWU has joined forces Highline Community College the Teachers of Tomorrow Conference at Green River Community College to present:
The 2nd Annual TeachingEquity Conference
May 1, 2010 on the campus of Highline Community College and CWU/Des Moines. (much more info to follow - stay tuned)

20th Annual Student of Color Conference,
"Generation of Change: We are the Future!"
Yakima, WA on April 22nd - 24th, 2010

2010 Race and Pedagogy National Conference
Oct. 28-30, 2010
University of Puget Sound, Tacoma, Washington

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