

# MULTICULTURAL RESOURCE CENTER

A collaborative project of Saint Paul Public Schools Office of Educational Equity and the East Metro Integration District

"The Problem Solver"  
Nail Fetis h From Congo



Fall 2007, Volume 3, Number 4.

## Poverty and Class in the Schools

*Three men walking along a riverbank noticed children in the river, floundering and struggling as if they were drowning. Two of the three jumped in and pulled the children out—one, then another, then another. The third man walked upstream. The first two rescued all the children without the help of their friend, who finally came back.*

*"Where were you?" they asked in exasperation. "We needed help!"*

*"I know," the third man replied, "but someone needed to find out who was throwing all the children in the water."*

*From **Poverty and Schooling in the U.S., Contexts and Consequences** by Sue Books.*

There has been much discussion and controversy in this past year about how schools should address poverty. Much of this discussion centers around controversy over Ruby Payne's work. Her success in providing resources to teachers in the area of poverty stems from teachers' urgent need for answers. Unfortunately, cultural competence, whether in a school system or an individual, does not occur as the result of a single day of training, a few consultations with experts, reading a book, or even taking a course. Rather it's a developmental process that depends on the continual acquisition of knowledge, the development of new and more advanced skills, and ongoing reflective self-evaluation of progress.

Simple answers or a one-size-fits-all solution can lead to inaccurate stereotypes, often coming from a deficit model. It is a lot easier to blame the kids than the look at ourselves and the system we function in, utilizing the missionary mentality of fixing those who are poor rather than working together to change the system.

In the long run, it is more effective to find out who is throwing all the children in the water, than constantly pulling them out one-by-one. The MRC has a number of resources to support school staff in their quest for professional growth, especially in the areas of race, poverty, and class. This issue of the MRC newsletter highlights just a few of the resources available for check out related to these topics. Our October workshop is also dedicated to the issue of poverty.

## Learn More About Poverty Online...

[http://www.tolerance.org/news/article\\_tol.jsp?id=1282](http://www.tolerance.org/news/article_tol.jsp?id=1282) Poverty exposed through hurricane Katrina

<http://www.usccb.org/cchd/povertyusa/edcenter/index.shtml> Lesson plans through Poverty USA

[http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/21\\_02/fram212.shtml](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/21_02/fram212.shtml) Article by Anita Bohn

<http://www.tolerance.org/teach/magazine/features.jsp?is=40&ar=777> Article by Paul Gorski

<http://www.classism.org> Class Action website

### MRC Steering Committee

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*The staff at the MRC have helped me to see that I plan more thoughtful and engaging lessons and dialogues with my students. I enjoy being the learner alongside my students, and they are often the teacher.*

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*Being a resource, helpful, and not making it prestigious. I like the idea that students can touch and use everything.*

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*It has provided an awareness to those who are unfamiliar with other cultures by experiencing something new (windows) and reflecting on his/her own culture (mirrors). It has also helped students of these cultures understand a bit more about who they are and where they came from.*

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*I have loved checking out the objects! It has been wonderful to have real objects to share with them to illustrate various cultures. The professional development resources (books from the MRC) have helped our school study group add strategies for working with urban learners.*

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*Awesome resource!*

## Exciting Events Coming Up @ the MRC

**Back by popular demand...MRC Movie Nights.** Each month during the 2007-2008 school year, the MRC will host a *free* community film screening. Students, staff, and community members are welcome to join us. Films have been selected to compliment monthly staff development offerings. Discussions will follow the films. Lemonade, snacks, and clock hours will be available. See below for a listing of featured films and dates. Check our website for complete descriptions of the films. While registration for the Movie Nights is not necessary, an RSVP would be appreciated. All films are from 4 pm to 6 pm at the MRC.

**Babel**, Tuesday, 9/25/07

**People Like Us: Social Class in America**, Wednesday, 10/24/07

**Black and White**, Tuesday, 11/27/07

**Mickey Mouse Monopoly**, Wednesday, 12/19/07

**What's Race Got To Do With It?**, Tuesday, 1/22/08

**N-Word**, Wednesday, 2/27/08

**Favela Rising**, Tuesday, 3/18/08

**Long Way From Home**, Wed., 4/30/08

**Transit Cafe**, Tuesday, 5/20/08

**The MRC offers monthly, evening staff development workshops focusing on a variety of issues.** These classes are *free* to staff in Saint Paul Public Schools and other EMID-member districts. A light supper and clock hours will be available to participants. To register for these workshops, complete a registration form (available on our website) and mail or fax to the MRC by the Friday before the workshop. Suburban staff may register online at <http://mrc.spps.org> and SPPS staff through <http://pdexpress.spps.org>. Workshops will be held at the MRC from 4:30-7 pm.

A listing of workshops for 2007-2008 are below.

**Using Objects to Teach Literacy**, Wednesday, 9/19/07

**Poverty Issues in Education**, Tuesday, 10/16/07

**Euro-American Culture**, Wednesday, 11/14/07

**Developing a Social Justice Curriculum**, Tuesday, 12/11/07

**White Privilege**, Wednesday, 1/16/08

**Teaching African American Students**, Tuesday, 2/19/08

**Music and Social Justice**, Wed., 3/12/08

**Women and Hmong Culture**, Tuesday, 4/22/08

**Understanding Islam**, Wednesday, 5/14/08

## From the Interdistrict Partnership Coach:

The SPPS Interdistrict Classroom Partnership Office facilitates classroom partnerships and collaborations with nine suburban districts that surround Saint Paul. The Interdistrict Partnerships are a voluntary cooperation of SPPS teachers (K-12 classrooms) and administrators for the purpose of fostering understanding, cultural awareness and respect through enriching academic classroom/student exchanges. Please feel free to email or contact my office for further information on these opportunities. Principals, consider inviting me to a staff meeting to present these wonderful opportunities to your staff.

You can reach me (Steve Severance) at [Stephen.severance@spps.org](mailto:Stephen.severance@spps.org) or 651-487-7363.

## Check It Out...Resources on Poverty and Class Available at the MRC

***Poverty and Schooling in the U.S.: Contexts and Consequences* by Sue Books.** Provides educators foundational information needed to address the educative needs of children living in poverty. Presents many perspectives that place poverty within a framework that helps educators move from explanations of poverty as a deficit model to a more holistic understanding of its complexity.

***People Like Us: Social Class in America [DVD]*** How do income, family background, education, attitudes, aspirations, and even appearance mark someone as a member of a particular social class? Discusses how social class plays a role in the lives of all Americans, whether they live in Park Avenue penthouses, Appalachian trailer parks, bayou houseboats or suburban gated communities. Travels across the U.S. to present stories of family traditions, class mobility, and different lifestyle choices.

***Nickle and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America* by Barbara Ehrenreich.** Ehrenreich moved from Florida to Maine to Minnesota, taking the cheapest lodgings available and accepting work as a waitress, hotel maid, house cleaner, nursing-home aide, and Wal-Mart salesperson. She soon discovered that even the lowliest occupations require exhausting mental and physical efforts. And one job is not enough; you need at least two if you intend to live indoors. Nickel and Dimed reveals low-wage America in all its tenacity, anxiety, and surprising generosity in a land of Big Boxes, fast food, and a thousand desperate strategies for survival.

***There Are No Children Here: The Story of Two Boys Growing Up in the Other America* by Alex Kotlowitz.** This is the moving and powerful account of two remarkable boys struggling to survive in Chicago's Henry Horner Homes, a public housing complex disfigured by crime and neglect.

***Finding Solutions to Hunger: Kids Can Make A Difference, A Sourcebook for Middle and Upper School Teachers* by Stephanie Kempf.** Explanations of global hunger are usually too simple and often wrong. The manual is based on the belief that children can be helped to understand the real causes of hunger and learn to change them. Each lesson leads the student through exercises that teach such things as the pain of hunger, the importance of food, the inequity of its distribution, the curious lack of relationship between hunger and population density, and the links between poverty, hunger, joblessness, and homelessness in the U.S. and elsewhere.

***An African Centered Response to Ruby Payne's Poverty Theory* by Jawanza Kunjufu.** This challenge to influential educator Ruby Payne's theories about the impact of class differences and economics on teaching and learning puts forward other factors as better predictors of student performance. Abandoning Payne's framework of teacher-student income disparities, racial makeup, and per-pupil expenditure, this critical analysis asserts the human component as the most powerful tool for improving education in failing schools.

***Teaching Economics as if People Mattered: A High School Curriculum Guide to the New Economy* by Tamara Sober Giecek.** This teacher's guide puts the research and publications of United for a Fair Economy into 21 sequential, stand-alone high school lesson plans about economic inequality and the human implications of economic

***Amazing Grace; The Lives of Children and the Conscience of a Nation* by Jonathan Kozol.** The children in this book defy the stereotypes of urban youth too frequently presented by the media. Tender, generous and often religiously devout, they speak with eloquence and honesty about the poverty and racial isolation that have wounded but not hardened them.

***Black Students, Middle Class Teachers* by Jawanza Kunjufu.** Are schools designed for middle-class children and, if so, what are the implications for the 50 percent of African Americans who live below the poverty line? Is the major issue between teachers and students class or racial difference?

***A Very Popular Economic Education Sampler* by the Highlander Research and Education Center.** Provides a variety of articles and activities for teaching about economics in an empowering way.

***Where We Stand: Class Matters* by bell hooks.** Hooks provides a valuable framework for discussing such difficult and unexplored areas as greed, the quest to live simply, the ruling-class co-optation of youth through popular culture, and real estate speculation as an instrument of racism.

**Browse our on-line catalog to discover more great resources for your classroom!**  
<http://mrc.spps.org/Catalog.html>

## Multicultural Resource Center

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.mrc.spps.org](http://www.mrc.spps.org)



Saint Paul  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## About the Multicultural Resource Center...

Multicultural education is a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and addresses current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices in education. It is grounded in ideals of social justice, education equity, and a dedication to facilitating educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners and as socially aware and active beings, locally, nationally, and globally. Multicultural education acknowledges that schools are essential to laying the foundation for the transformation of society and the elimination of oppression and injustice. ~Paul Gorski (<http://www.edchange.org>)

The Multicultural Resource Center (MRC) facilitates access, for teachers, to the necessary tools to infuse learning experiences with Multicultural Education. The MRC is part library, part museum, mostly a place where educators can come to build their capacity in working with diverse students and find resources to support this new capacity.

The goal of the MRC is to promote the creation of equitable learning environments infused with multiple, authentic viewpoints that confront the norming of whiteness. Through curricular support, lending out materials to support such an environment, and providing modeling through class visits and staff development opportunities, social change will occur. Please explore our website to gain a better understanding of the MRC's various roles.

### Browsing Hours...Stop On By!

While the MRC is available for class visits and meetings during the day, we have set aside the specific times below for patron browsing and check-out. It is best to call before you come to ensure that someone will be available to assist you.

***Mondays and Thursdays, 1 pm-4 pm***

***Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 2 pm-6 pm***

***All other times, by appointment.***

Check out our website for policies and procedures for reserving the MRC.

### Other Opportunities...

Did you know that the East Metro Integration District (EMID) has a new series of staff development offerings? Interested staff may register for year-long SEED courses and individual Lecture and Learning series. Register online at [http://www.emid6067.net/pro\\_dev.html](http://www.emid6067.net/pro_dev.html) or contact Stacie Stanley at 651.379.2707. Registration and substitute costs are covered through EMID collaborative funding.

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