A Response That Answers How This Legislation Aligns to the Expectation and Teachers Need Ongoing Professional Develop That Addresses Cultural Competency and Reading Preparation Training.

This legislation provides monies for professional development of all teachers K-12. The legislation focuses on teachers teaching the thinking skills that are needed in today’s and tomorrow’s world. It is in our collective, enlightened self-interests to support this legislation. The language addresses issues of equity, equality and economics. The skills, once mastered by our students would, while preparing all students for the changing workplace, fuel tax revenue for carrying out our state government’s role, funding health care, funding education, funding infrastructure, funding social services, and other government responsibilities. But most importantly we would be providing to all students, including the most vulnerable, the skills necessary to lift them out of poverty.

This legislation requires all teachers to be taught how to teach the skills of critical thinking, creative thinking, inquiry learning, problem based learning and the skills of working collaboratively. While all these skills, if taught with fidelity, would result in the narrowing of the achievement gap, there exists other evidence suggesting Cultural Competency is enhanced for teacher and literacy skills they teach will grow.

In facilitating an inquiry experience with students, that facilitator will tap students’ strengths in the initial inquiry experiences. Well prepared teachers, in the professional development they receive, will understand the importance of tapping students’ strengths which creates student motivation to learn and triggers student engagement. Employing a resource for the inventory of students’ strengths, the teacher begins to understand a student through a different lens. Instead of looking for deficits, a teacher/facilitator learns more about an individual student and what motivates that student to dig deeply into the understandings surrounding his/her inquiry. That new understanding enables the teacher/facilitator to continue to tap that cultural lens of understanding to connect with the student and to support that student for success and successes that will follow.

There exists some evidence that suggests literacy skills are enhanced in inquiry learning. If your lesson plan, learning targets include reading comprehension as well as inquiry learning outcomes, research indicates that many students strive to reach deep comprehension of the texts they read for answering the big question of their inquiry. (Biancarosa and Snow 2006; Brozo and Simpson 2007). Today’s state standards, emphasize topical informational texts and literary nonfiction, such as essays, speeches, biographies, and autobiographies, as well as fictional texts. All could become sources for an inquirer, in their search for expert voices to support their inquiry. Standards also require students to read in all content areas, engage with increasingly complex texts that are beyond their proficient reading level, and cite evidence from texts to support their interpretations for their inquiries.

Inquiry allows the teacher facilitator to provide open-ended experiences and investigations that enable students to enter at their own reading readiness levels. It is a flexible approach that ranges from the creation of a classroom Wonder Centre to problem-based projects, to action research and ethnography. There are many inquiry models that can be used or adapted by the teacher. Although the teacher’s role is different from more traditional models, the teacher plans and guides the learning, providing support as needed

In a small study examining impact of inquiry learning on reading comprehension, results showed that there were statistically significant differences at (α ≤ 0.05) in the total mean scores of the reading comprehension test between the students who learned through using inquiry learning strategy (experimental group) and those who learn through the traditional method (control group) in the post-test. Also the results showed that there were statistically significant differences at (α ≤ 0.05) in the total mean scores of self-regulation between the students who learn through using inquiry learning strategy (experimental group) and those who learn through the traditional method (control group) in the post-test.

In another study, researchers examined the effects of six-year integrated information literacy instruction on elementary students, memory and comprehension of subject content through inquiry learning and also focused on the moderating factor of students' academic achievement levels. The subjects were 75 students participating in the study from the time when they entered elementary school. The school adopted information literacy instruction and integrated it into various subject areas using the framework of inquiry learning. *A total of 11 inquiry learning projects were implemented from Grade 1 through Grade 6. The results showed that inquiry-based integrated information literacy instruction helps students memorize facts and apply new concepts in the subject content. In general, the progress level in comprehension was higher than in memory learning for the six-year integrated information literacy instruction.* Regardless of students' prior academic achievement levels, if they devoted their efforts to inquiry processes, their fact memorization and conceptual understanding of subject content improved. Low-achieving students displayed the most progression in both memory and comprehension learning, compared to their medium- and high-achieving peers. This study underscores the importance of information literacy instruction in students' learning.