

THE DIVERSITY KIT

**An Introductory Resource for
Social Change in Education**



PART I:

HUMAN

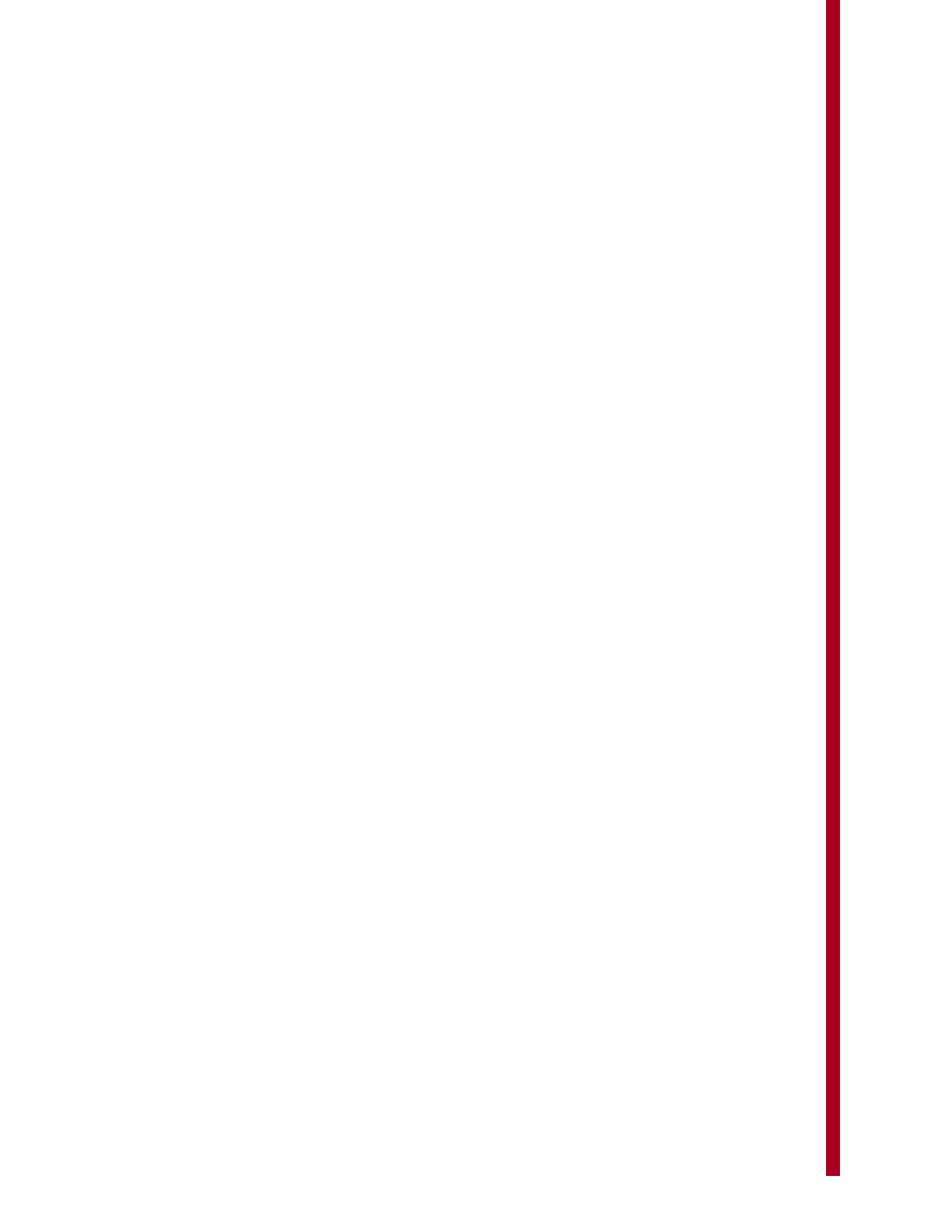
DEVELOPMENT



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INTRODUCTION



The Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory

a program of The Education Alliance at Brown University

The LAB, a program of The Education Alliance at Brown University, is one of ten educational laboratories funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. Our goals are to improve teaching and learning, advance school improvement, build capacity for reform, and develop strategic alliances with key members of the region's education and policymaking community.

The LAB develops educational products and services for school administrators, policymakers, teachers, and parents in New England, New York, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Central to our efforts is a commitment to equity and excellence. Information about LAB programs and services is available by contacting:



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Development of this product was begun under a previous regional educational laboratory contract by the Language and Cultural Diversity Laboratory Networking Program. Many of the participants are acknowledged as authors below, but the group as a whole deserves acknowledgment for working together to shape an approach to the product that could best serve educators and their students.

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Members of the LAB's National Leadership Advisory Panel contributed to the review of this document. Their recommendations help assure that the LAB's work concerning equity and diversity is appropriate, effective, and useful in the field, particularly in improving educational outcomes for students with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

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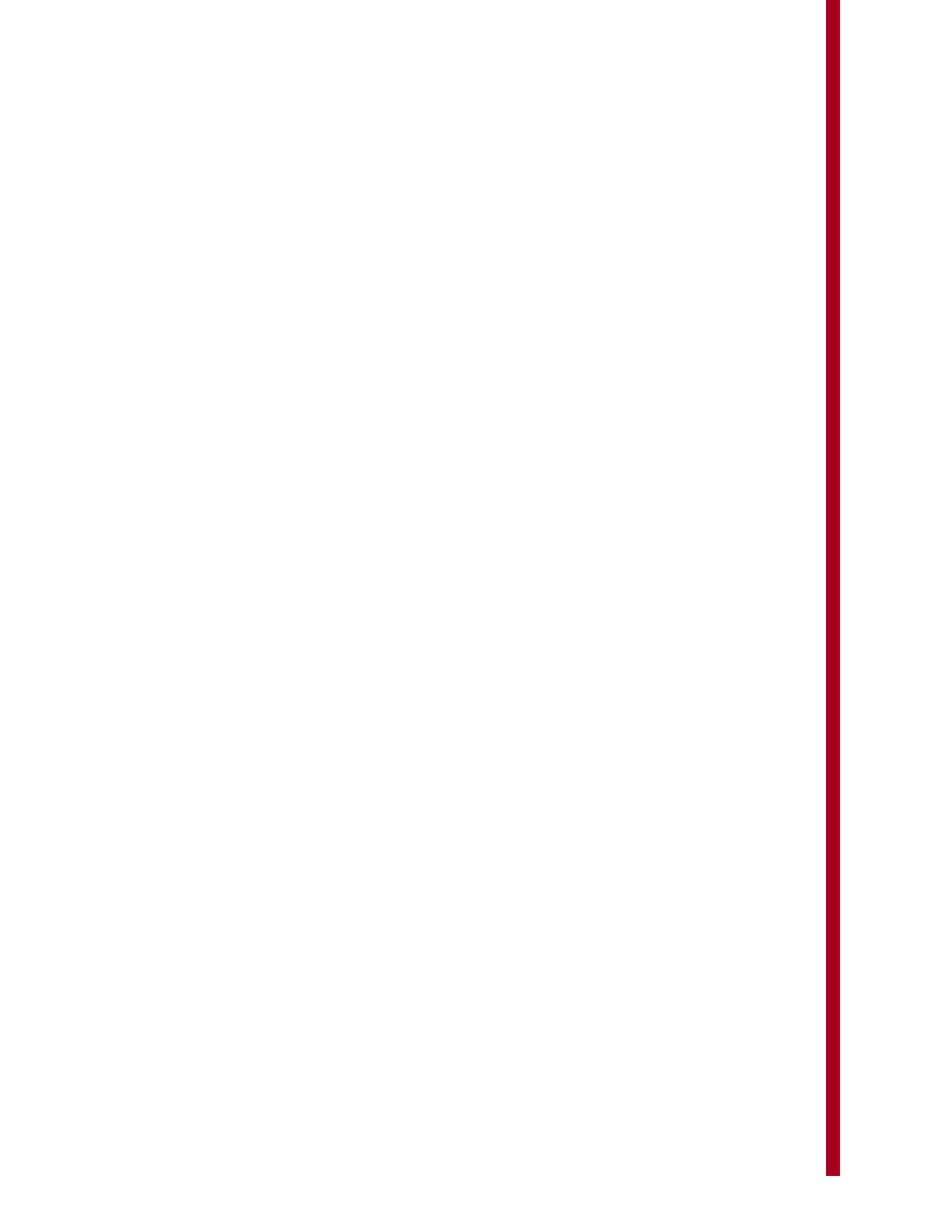
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THE DIVERSITY KIT

An Introductory Resource for Social Change in Education

This is a time of newly acknowledged diversity in U.S. culture. Voices are becoming audible; faces are becoming visible; and we are realizing, some of us for the first time, how many silences there have been in the past, how many blank spaces in our history. . . . We are discovering the range of perspectives that must be taken into account as we work to remake community, as we strive to achieve a common ground. (Greene, 1993, pp. 1-2).

Introduction

Every student that sets foot in our schools has the potential to succeed, yet many groups of students get left behind—not because they can't succeed, but because school practices prevent students with different learning styles from being able to demonstrate their talents. Current demographic trends and projections regarding the cultural and linguistic diversity of the U.S. indicate the importance of improving the educational experience of underserved student populations. A quality public education system is one that accepts the challenge of serving its diverse student populations. To meet this challenge, public education needs to integrate science and social science research on human development and diversity with current education reform initiatives and practice (Berman et al., 1997; Williams, 1996).

The Diversity Kit: An Introductory Resource for Social Change in Education strives to address this challenge. It is an invitation to educators at all levels, policymakers, and communities to examine their beliefs, perceptions, behaviors, and educational practices with respect to diversity in education. It is meant to be a springboard or starting point for further discussions that we hope will take place in classrooms, teachers' lounges, schools, state and district offices of education, colleges of education, and communities at large.

We believe that *The Diversity Kit* is needed now more than ever. In the past, the task of teaching was less complicated; schools had their ways of delivering instruction, and students were expected to adapt to them in order to get as much as they could from their education. Today, teachers face a variety of new challenges. Society's expectations for achievement in education, changing community demographics, and school reform initiatives place new demands on teachers—demands for versatility, flexibility, and creativity (González & Darling-Hammond, 1997). If students in the past were expected to change to fit the school, there is now an understanding that schools and teachers must change to meet the needs of students.

We caution that the content of this kit is emotion-laden. As opposed to other content



areas that can be examined using more impersonal and dispassionate scientific approaches, culture and language go to the very heart of who we are—they permeate our lives and the way we live them. Thus, this kit—which prompts readers to question their assumptions about culture, language, and human development—will most likely generate lively discussions, heated debates, and lengthy discourse. This kit is designed to engage readers both personally and professionally. Our highest hope is that *The Diversity Kit* will contribute to reflective social action that will transform the face of education—action that will make schools more just and equity-driven institutions in which all children have an abundance of opportunities to succeed to the best of their abilities.

Background and Rationale

Building a system of schools that can educate people for contemporary society requires two things U.S. schools have never before been called upon to do: To teach for understanding. That is, to teach all students, not just a few, to understand ideas deeply and perform proficiently. To teach for diversity. That is, to teach in ways that help different kinds of learners find productive paths to knowledge as they also learn to live constructively together. (Darling-Hammond, 1997, p.5)

The history of the United States is characterized by cultural and linguistic diversity. In the early 1900s, immigrant children comprised the majority in many urban schools, and African American, Mexican American, and Native American children were heavily concentrated in southern and western states. Since then, perceptions of diversity have changed. Whereas the cultural diversity distinguishing European American immigrant groups has diminished as they merged into the “melting pot,” those groups distinguished by race have mostly continued to be perceived as “different” in the eyes of the white majority. Corresponding social changes, including shifts in population demographics, have modified societal perceptions of diversity.

The “problem” of diversity in education intensifies when we consider that American society has equated difference (based on race, ethnicity, language, religion, disabilities, etc.) with inherent intellectual inferiority (Banks, 1995). These perceptions of inherent inferiority—referred to as deficit assumptions—continue to negatively influence our society and the expectations and practices of schools across the nation.

Overrepresentation of racial and language minorities in low academic tracks and in remedial and special education programs is the result of these assumptions. There is little current evidence that major reform efforts are adequately addressing these issues (August & Hakuta, 1997; Berman et al., 1997; Villegas, 1991; Williams, 1996).

As the population of the United States is changing to become increasingly diverse, our perception of what diversity means to our culture is also changing. For example, in terms of linguistic diversity, data obtained from the recent 2000 Census revealed that the number of children between the ages of 5 and 17 who speak a language other than English has increased by over 54% from the previous 1990 Census (Crawford, 2001). This increase in linguistic diversity forces us to rethink the purposes of American public education and to figure out how best to educate an increasingly diverse student population. One positive aspect of American culture presently is that we have been able to combine a more humanistic view of what education should offer to learners with an increasing openness to diversity. The result is that, although many schools are not fully prepared for the complexities of educating linguistically and culturally diverse populations, there is growing openness to the idea that all students deserve an education that helps them learn to high standards.

The time is ripe for all educators to begin incorporating diversity into their thinking and teaching. Diversity plays a central role in the work of all educators, not just those who work with particular cultural or language populations and not just those who work in the classroom. Because we believe that diversity is at the heart of public education in this country, we have created a kit that all educators can use to stimulate their thinking, their observation, and their conversation on this issue.

A Tool for Professional Development

Because the goal of *The Diversity Kit* is to stimulate personal and professional development, we have aimed to make the kit useful to educators as well as those who train them. We have not detailed a series of classroom activities, but rather have presented recent research on human development, culture, and language in a variety of forms—summaries of research studies, descriptions of activities to stimulate individual and group inquiry, and descriptions of vignettes designed to provide educators with examples for discussion and reflection. Numerous examples of many different cultural groups and the kinds of experiences they have in America's schools show the limited, as well as the creative, approaches schools sometimes employ. While these examples explore interactions between diversity and education, they do not represent



all possible population subgroups in America's schools. Our hope is that users of *The Diversity Kit* will find here the materials they need to begin a rich conversation about issues of teaching and diversity that affect their specific learning community.

An effective professional development model for teachers of diverse learners affords teachers opportunities for personal and professional growth relating to human development, language, and culture. *The Diversity Kit* gives professional development staff, teachers, and other educators an opportunity to enhance their knowledge about and skill in teaching linguistically

and culturally diverse students. Professional development must help teachers see the connections between culture, language, and learning. As the Holmes Group (1990) states:

Much of the basic knowledge necessary for better teaching and learning in classrooms with widely diverse students is not yet part of the essential core of education studies. Along with their subject matter, teachers need to become students of their students—their cultural metaphors, languages and linguistic understandings, learning styles—to recognize them as resources for learning. Similarly, teachers need to study themselves. To revisit their own experiences as learners and to gain greater understanding of the cultural assumptions they bring to their students. (p. 41)

Therefore, a goal of *The Diversity Kit* is to stimulate educators to engage in ongoing inquiry, problem solving, and innovation with their colleagues. It is our hope that such activities will achieve the following results: bring about necessary and appropriate changes in teachers' beliefs, ideas, and instructional strategies surrounding the education of culturally and linguistically diverse students; dispel myths in education regarding human development, culture, and language; and advance work toward reflective, social action that views cultural and linguistic diversity as a resource to be tapped in the education of all children.

Scope and Organization of The Diversity Kit

The Diversity Kit addresses the needs of educators, aiming to provide them with information and activities that stimulate personal and professional growth. This kit is grounded on some key assumptions about what the concerns of public education should be. Schooling must

- prepare all students to engage in meaningful work
- train students to become flexible thinkers
- focus high standards of accountability on the goal of student learning
- promote equity and excellence

With these assumptions in mind, we believe three key principles should guide public education in America. American public education must

- value and promote diversity
- teach humanistically as well as rigorously
- become a model for other aspects of American society

These are ambitious principles, but they represent the values underlying this kit. We recognize that the challenges of increasing population diversity in education are not simply pedagogical. There are also complicating cultural issues that go to the heart of American beliefs and attitudes. However, we believe that when educators have an opportunity to work together in a stimulating professional development environment where reflection and inquiry are supported, they can not only increase their effectiveness in serving a wide range of students but can lead social change that connects the humanistic valuing of diversity to high aspirations for all students.

Theoretical Framework

The Diversity Kit is grounded on the sociocultural theory of Lev Vygotsky, who suggested (1) that human development and learning occur as a result of an individual's interaction with society and (2) that this interaction takes place in and is informed by a particular cultural context. Vygotsky's work emphasized that individuals make sense of their world through discourse and interaction with others. Thus, knowledge is socially constructed and situated in culture.

Vygotsky further posited that learning occurs when students are effectively “scaffolded” to acquire new knowledge; this happens as a result of classroom interactions. In

scaffolding, teachers or more capable peers identify the knowledge that students already have and bridge that knowledge to acquire new knowledge. Scaffolding occurs in a space referred to as the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Moll (1989) describes the ZPD as “specific ways that adults (or peers) socially mediate or interactionally create circumstances for learning.” The ZPD can be thought of spatially as a place where students engage in learning through interaction with teachers, artifacts, or more capable peers. More recently, scholars have extended the notion of ZPD to a “third space,” that is, a hybrid space created when students interact with teachers or peers while engaged in learning (Gutiérrez, Baquedano-López, & Tejada, 1999; Gutiérrez, Rymes, & Larson, 1995). These scholars conceptualize this as a “space in which alternative and competing discourses and positionings transform conflict and difference into rich zones of collaboration and learning” (Gutiérrez et al., 1999, p. 286).

The Diversity Kit is also grounded in the theory of constructivism, or the theory of the social construction of knowledge. Constructivism maintains that knowledge is not fixed and objective, but rather is fluid and subjective, constructed by an individual through discourse and interaction with teachers and peers or through experience with objects. A constructivist theory of learning posits that students are active agents in their learning, not passive receptacles into which information is deposited. In the constructivist perspective, the role of the teacher becomes one of facilitator; teachers facilitate students’ learning through the discourse, interaction, and personalized projects that take place in the classroom. Students are at the center of the

learning process, and the role of teachers is to facilitate that learning through guided instruction.



Vygotsky’s theories of teaching and learning bear upon issues of diversity. Vygotsky’s work was founded on the assumption that “in order to understand the individual, one must first understand the social relations in which the individual exists” (Wertsch, 1985, p. 58). In order to effectively scaffold students to acquire new knowledge, create a ZPD, or enter the third space, educators must not only identify the social influences and cultural world of the individual; they must also value students’ knowledge and

perspectives on the world as resources to be tapped rather than a problem to be solved (Ruiz, 1984). Further, students learn most effectively when they are active co-constructors of their learning. *The Diversity Kit* uses sociocultural theory and constructivism to provide frameworks within which this kind of teaching and learning can be imagined and implemented.

Organization

The Diversity Kit: An Introductory Resource for Social Change in Education synthesizes the new findings of researchers and theorists studying applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, cognitive psychology, neuroscience and the brain, cultural anthropology, and sociology. *The Diversity Kit* provides the most current information, research, and thinking on three areas of great importance to the health and well-being of the ever-diversifying U.S. population:

- **Human Development** and learning as they are understood by many different scientific and social disciplines
- **Culture**, including material and visible aspects as well as structures of belief and thinking
- **Language** learning and language use within social, economic, and political contexts

The Diversity Kit is organized around each of the three sections of Human Development, Culture, and Language. Each of the three sections is preceded by an Executive Summary, which details the scope and objectives of the section that follows. In addition, each section includes a set of guiding questions, activities and vignettes, and suggested resources for further inquiry. The activities and vignettes are intended to provoke discussion, planning, and actions that will lead educators to revise their practices. The content for each of these sections does not include an exhaustive review of literature and research. To do so would go beyond the purpose and intent of this document. Instead, each section includes the most important and current information and provides guiding activities that can stimulate reflection, conversation, and inquiry.

Below we provide a general overview of what you will find in the kit. A more detailed overview can be found in the Executive Summary that precedes each section.

- **Human Development.** In this section of *The Diversity Kit*, we have outlined research and theory on human development and diversity. Drawing upon several disciplines—biology and neuroscience, cognitive psychology, cultural anthropology, sociolinguistics, and sociology—the human development section provides educators with insight about ways to think about human development with culture and language in mind. We introduce the notion of human development as an ongoing, lifelong process. We also discuss the concept of multiple intelligences theory and its implications for classroom teaching.
- **Culture.** This section of *The Diversity Kit* challenges mistaken perceptions and assumptions about culture. The goal of this section is for educators to gain an appreciation for variations within cultural groups and knowledge of individuals within their cultural contexts. These topics lead to a discussion on how culturally informed supports for learning at home, in the community, and in school can influence student success. By redefining family involvement and describing strategies for linking schools to community resources and services, this section provides an overview of how the many elements of cultural context can play a vital role in student success.
- **Language.** Because language is the primary means of transmitting culture across generations and of transacting learning in school, this section explores how distinct cultural groups use language in different ways and how language use is perceived differently by members of distinct cultural groups. This section contrasts views of language proficiency that focus on acquisition of forms (vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation) with views that focus on the ways in which students use language to accomplish various tasks. A close look is taken at language development, dialects, and the process of learning a new language. We also pay special attention to the timely and heated topics of literacy and assessment of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

Because language, culture, and human development are challenging and inherently emotion-laden topics that generate heated discussion, we strongly suggest that this kit be used in conjunction with a facilitator who is knowledgeable about issues of diversity in education. In addition, while the format of *The Diversity Kit* lends itself to being used as three individual sections, we suggest using *The Diversity Kit* in its entirety in order to gain a more thorough understanding of human development, culture, and language, and how these three areas intersect in their educational application.

The Diversity Kit introduces teachers to many of the most important ideas about diversity and learning. However, it is just a beginning for schools committed to helping all students learn and achieve to the highest standards. Exploring issues of human development, culture, and language is a reflective process that continues over a long period of time. We hope that using *The Diversity Kit* will transform educational practice in classrooms throughout America to ensure equity and excellence for diverse students everywhere.

DIVERSITY KIT OUTLINE

The Diversity Kit: An Introductory Resource for Social Change in Education

INTRODUCTION

Part I: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Executive Summary

Human Development: A Multidisciplinary Approach

- I. **Guiding Questions**
- II. **Rethinking Learning and Development**
 - a. *New Understandings Lead to New Possibilities*
 - b. *Changing Conceptions and New Educational Approaches*
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Exploring the Philosophy of Education
 - c. *What Is Intelligence?*
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Exploring Your Learning Experiences
 - ii. **ACTIVITY:** Exploring Teaching and Learning
- III. **Biology and Neuroscience**
 - a. *Critical Periods*
 - b. *Enriched Environments*
 - c. *Hemisphere Differences*
- IV. **Cognitive Psychology**
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Multiple Intelligences
 - ii. **VIGNETTE:** Rethinking Assumptions and Expectations
 - iii. **ACTIVITY:** Multiple Intelligences and School Restructuring
- V. **Cultural Anthropology and Cultural Psychology**
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Community and Group Cultural Styles
 - ii. **VIGNETTE:** Home and Community Contexts: Uncovering Students' Funds of Knowledge

VI. Sociolinguistics

- i. VIGNETTE: Confronting Language Differences

VII. Sociology

- i. ACTIVITY: Resilience and Student Learning
- ii. ACTIVITY: Rethinking Learning Deficits

VIII. References

Resources, Further Reading, Web Sites, and Online Resources

Part II: CULTURE

Executive Summary

Overview: Culture, Identity, and Development

I. Guiding Questions**II. What Is Cultural Identity?**

- i. ACTIVITY: Exploring Cultural Identity
- a. *Definitions of Culture and the Invisibility of One's Own Culture*
 - i. ACTIVITY: Exploring Values, Beliefs, and Ideas
- b. *Individual Differences Within Cultures and the Dynamic Nature of Culture*
 - i. ACTIVITY: Personal Cultural History Exercise
- c. *Minority Cultural Identity Development*
 - i. VIGNETTE: Supporting Students' Ethnic Identity in School
- d. *How Is Learning Both Social and Cultural?*
 - i. ACTIVITY: Culture and Learning
 - ii. VIGNETTE: Conducting a Critical Ethnography
 - iii. VIGNETTE: Making Connections through Dialogue

III. How Does Valuing Students' Cultures Support Their Development in Schools?

- a. *Cultural Value Orientations: Collectivism and Individualism*
 - i. ACTIVITY: Valuing Culture
 - ii. VIGNETTE: Mismatches in Cultural Expectations
 - iii. ACTIVITY: Exploring Individualist and Collectivist Orientations
- b. *Historical Power Relations and Their Impact on Development and Learning*
 - i. ACTIVITY: Letter from Kai James (1998)

Culture, Teaching, and Learning

- I. **Guiding Questions**
- II. **How Are High Expectations Especially Critical for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Learners?**
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Honoring Cultural Identity
 - ii. **VIGNETTE:** Challenging Cultural Assumptions: Mr. Stivale
 - iii. **VIGNETTE:** Constructing a Community of Learners: Mr. Diaz
- III. **How Can Teachers Learn about Students' Home Cultures?**
 - i. **VIGNETTE:** Funds of Knowledge—Learning about the Community
 - ii. **VIGNETTE:** From Martha Floyd-Tenery, Bilingual Resource Teacher
- IV. **How Can Teachers Use Their Understanding of Students' Home Cultures to Teach in Culturally Relevant Ways?**
 - i. **VIGNETTE:** Exposing Inequities through Education

Culture, Family, and Community

- I. **Guiding Questions**
- II. **Building on Family Strengths**
 - i. **VIGNETTE:** Bringing Schools and Communities Together
- III. **Impact of Culture on Learning**
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Shade et al.'s Social Process of Writing
- IV. **Cultural Knowledge, Curriculum, and Learning**
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Examining Curriculum for Culture and Language
- V. **Overcoming Challenges to Involving Families and Communities**
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Challenging Cultural Assumptions of Parental Involvement
 - ii. **ACTIVITY:** Overcoming Barriers to Involvement

Resources, Further Reading, Web Sites, Online Resources, and Videos

Part III: LANGUAGE

Executive Summary

Language, Culture, and Schooling

- I. **Guiding Questions**
- II. **The Ability of Language to Shape Life Chances**
- III. **Cultural Differences in Communication Style and Language Use**
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Exploring Storytelling
 - a. *Direct and Indirect Speech*
 - i. **VIGNETTE:** Communicating Bad News
 - ii. **VIGNETTE:** The Field Trip
 - b. *Language Attitudes*
 - c. *Language Varieties—Dialects, Pidgins, and Creoles*
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Exploring Language Variation
 - ii. **CASE STUDY:** African American Vernacular English (Black Language)

Learning a Second Language

- I. **Guiding Questions**
- II. **Theories of Bilingualism and Second Language Acquisition**
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Interview with a Second Language Learner
 - a. *Environmental Theory*
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Schumann’s Social and Psychological Distance
 - b. *Nativist Theories*
 - i. **ACTIVITY:** Krashen’s Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis
- III. **Developmental Stages of Sequence of Language Acquisition**
 - i. **VIGNETTE:** Silent Period: Marta and Esteban
 - ii. **ACTIVITY:** Language Experience Approach
- IV. **Models of Bilingual Education**

Language and Literacy

- I. **Guiding Questions**
- II. **Cultural Approaches to Literacy**
 - i. VIGNETTE: Class Books
 - a. *Oral Language as the Basis for Written Language*
 - b. *Elements of Literacy Proficiency*
 - i. Phonological Awareness
 - ii. Print-Based Skills
 - iii. Vocabulary and Prior Knowledge
 - 1. ACTIVITY: Semantic Mapping
 - iv. Knowledge of Discourse Structures
 - v. Knowledge of Appropriate Literary Styles
 - vi. Purposes for Reading
 - c. *Second Language Issues in Acquiring Literacy*
 - 1. VIGNETTE: Disproportionate Representation of English Language Learners
 - i. Knowledge of Morphology
 - ii. Knowledge of Syntax
 - 1. ACTIVITY: Critical Literacy
 - 2. ACTIVITY: Exploring Literacy for English Language Learners
 - d. *Different Orthographies*

Language and Assessment

- I. **Guiding Questions**
- II. **Assessing Language Proficiency**
- III. **Language Factors, Content Mastery, and Assessment**
- IV. **Assessment as a Cultural Event**
 - i. VIGNETTE: Hermana May Understand, but I Can't Tell
- V. **Authentic Assessment and Second Language Learners**
 - i. ACTIVITY: Assessment Design Self-Assessment Checklist
- VI. **A Note on Grading**
 - i. ACTIVITY: Grading the Work of English Language Learners
- VII. **Language Differences, Language Deficits, and Learning Problems**

Resources, Further Reading, Web Sites, Online Resources, and Videos

The Diversity Kit: A Resource for Social Change in Education

Diversity Kit Activity Chart

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PART II: CULTURE

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