



**Seeking Educational Equity and  
Diversity in Elk Grove Schools:**

# A Retrospective Look at the Impact of **SEED**

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*Diane Wood, Debra Smith, and Mark Hicks*

**Collaborative Inquiry and Development Group**

**University of Southern Maine**

**December 2005**

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## RESEARCH TEAM

The Lucent Technologies Foundation supported this study through a generous grant, and the Collaborative Inquiry and Development Group (CIDGroup) in the College of Education, University of Southern Maine (USM) coordinated the research team. Please feel free to contact any of us with questions or comments.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Rhetoric about serving “all children” abounds in public education, yet many aspects of schooling continue to marginalize large numbers of students. Despite good intentions, the assumptions, attitudes, and conditions that can preclude student success are often invisible to educational policymakers and practitioners.

These students are not invisible to the deeply committed people we came to know in the course of conducting this retrospective study of SEED in Elk Grove schools. We dedicate this report to these educators and SEED leaders, especially Odie Douglas for his vision and unwavering commitment to academic excellence and equity for all Elk Grove students, and Peggy McIntosh and Emily Style for their work over the past two decades to nurture national SEED’s faculty-centered, faculty-led, faculty development, focused on issues of equity and diversity for teachers in schools across the U.S.

The late Richard Curcio of the Lucent Technologies Foundation invited us to conduct this study. We appreciate his and the Foundation’s support for this work and are sorry that we were not able to complete this report before his untimely death. Richard’s deep commitment to the education of all students and the professional development of teachers was an inspiration to the team.

Finally, our team was larger than the three of us whose names appear on the cover of this report. Betty Lou Whitford served as advisor to the research team. Sherrie Winton assisted us in data collection and analysis and transcribed hundreds of pages of interviews and field notes. Alison Moser and Laura O’Neill shepherded the report through design, production, and publication; and Chris Backiel served as our graphic artist and technology expert.



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# A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF SEED (SEEKING EDUCATIONAL EQUITY AND DIVERSITY) IN ELK GROVE (CA) SCHOOLS

## Executive Summary

### *Background*

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The student population of Elk Grove School District in the Sacramento Valley of California has changed dramatically in the last decade. What was once a relatively homogeneous community has become a rich pastiche of cultures and languages. Beginning with one teacher committed to ensuring equitable learning experiences for the increasingly diverse students in her school, a network has developed in Elk Grove in partnership with SEED, an acronym for Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity. This national professional development initiative has created a markedly democratic, faculty-centered approach to creating equitable and inclusive strategies for teaching and learning ([www.wcwonline.org/seed](http://www.wcwonline.org/seed)).

The foundational idea of SEED (McIntosh, 1990; Style, 1988) posits that responding to diverse students' needs requires educators to actively, collaboratively, and consistently discuss and investigate both multiple human perspectives and equitable educational approaches. Thus, SEED holds yearly summer workshops in which self-selected leaders explore their own identities and experiences as well as multicultural

and gender-fair schooling. These SEED leaders then return to their local schools and districts and recruit colleagues to engage in monthly seminars to do the same. Although SEED leaders agree to facilitate a seminar for one year as a condition of their training, most seminars continue to meet, voluntarily and without compensation, over a period of years.

One hundred and three Elk Grove educators have attended these national SEED New Leaders Weeks, making the district, with the generous support of the Lucent Technologies Foundation, the first in the country to incorporate SEED strategies. As a result, a cumulative total of 1,936 Elk Grove educators participated in monthly seminars focused on issues of equity and diversity in the eight school years between 1997 and 2005. In those groups, authentic, democratic dialogue has become the currency for collaboration, professional development, and culturally responsive teaching.

### *Learning about Elk Grove*

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At the request of the Lucent Technologies Foundation in 2003, a research team from the Collaborative Inquiry and Development Group at the University of Southern Maine conducted a retrospective study on the impact of SEED in Elk Grove. In keeping with the spirit of SEED endeavors, the researchers worked closely with Elk Grove and national SEED leaders, using an adaptation of a "Learning History" approach (Roth & Kleiner, 1996). This design attempts to capture the stories of change efforts and their impact on educators' thinking and practice, curricula, school culture and organizational structures, students' learning and experience of school, and families. The resulting history will be a learning tool for

participants, as well as a vehicle for disseminating the lessons of their work to a broader audience.

Initially mapping a project timeline with the Elk Grove SEED Advisory Group, the team conducted interviews and focus groups with nearly 100 Elk Grove SEED leaders and participants and observed group activities. In addition, Elk Grove educators collected local documentation, including examples of curricula representative of inclusive educational practices. After analyzing nearly 400 pages of transcripts, notes, and related materials, the research team identified emergent themes and wrote a draft report that was then reviewed by Elk Grove educators and national SEED leaders. An intensive discussion of the report occurred in Elk Grove in August 2004 and informed the final report.

### *Promising Practices and Emergent Themes*

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**A**t the very heart of the SEED initiative is the hope that classrooms and schools can be transformed into places where every child—regardless of background, affiliation, style/preference, or life experience—has a more than reasonable chance to learn and grow. Recognizing that the human condition leads us to be suspicious of ideas, behaviors, and persons we perceive as different, SEED seminar leaders and participants create intentional, decidedly safe environments within schools where teachers, parents, administrators, and students grapple openly with difference in ways that create empowering relationships. And it seems to make a difference.

There are at least five reasons why these SEED seminars are promising. They:

1. create a safe space for uncovering human differences, which too frequently exist unrecognized and unappreciated;
2. demonstrate how the surfacing and sharing of human differences can challenge “common-sensical” notions about the world, expand knowledge, and deepen understanding;
3. surface sublimated conflicts so they can be negotiated and common purposes can emerge;
4. strengthen commitments and empower participants to take a stand; and
5. imbue participants through the above experiences with insights and strategies for designing inclusive, respectful, and trusting learning environments.

This is not easily achieved. SEED leaders facilitate experiences that help participants first recognize and then work against patterns of stereotyping, confront prejudices, and challenge forms of oppression that curtail economic and social mobility and lie deeply embedded in the very social institutions and structures that sustain this society.

The SEED process is iterative and spiraling. Participants experience a deep sense of disequilibrium as they undertake this transformative work, pulled by co-existing tensions between:

- alienation and belonging
- vulnerability and empowerment
- revelation and recognition
- agency and reciprocity
- ambiguity and certainty

For example, many participants join SEED because they themselves feel *alienated* or have witnessed others who feel that way. They seek a sense of *belonging* to a community with a commitment to inclusiveness. Participants often feel *empowered* by their SEED experiences; yet, they can also feel *vulnerable* during their interactions with a SEED group.

The process is, as SEED participants state over and over, “life changing.” They no longer see themselves or others in the same way. They can no longer be silent when they witness injustice. In large and small ways, participants become advocates for equitable learning experiences for their students, and they come to see parents as essential allies in their children’s education.

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## *Facing Realities and Finding Possibilities*

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SEED in Elk Grove has grown from a single seminar to a network active in 26 schools. It has committed leadership and a strong presence. In order for SEED work to continue and flourish in the district, however, several challenges await:

1. The sustainability of SEED in Elk Grove will require both a long-term strategy that includes ways to inform and actively involve district leadership and build alliances with community-based groups, and a commitment of resources to support coordination and continued training of new leaders.
2. As groups evolve, so too must facilitators' abilities to support their members' growth. SEED facilitators need opportunities to deepen their knowledge of group dynamics and their facilitation skills over time.
3. It is presently unclear who joins SEED, how and why they make that choice, and who leaves seminars and why. Collecting data about participation will help planning.
4. The true test of SEED work will ultimately be the impact it has on the district community. There are indications that some educators naturally implement and adapt SEED insights, concepts, and strategies in their daily practice. Others, however, do not. Inventorying and describing specifically if and how SEED ideas are translated into practice will benefit educators and students across the district.

Elk Grove SEED holds great promise for creating truly safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environments for children and adults. Challenging assumptions that often fuel low expectations for teachers and students is hard, deep work, but SEED is the most powerful avenue we have seen for addressing inequities that exist in schools and the larger community.

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## FOREWORD

**The Assumptions and Structure of the National SEED Project**

The National SEED Project started in 1986 as an experiment to see whether teachers could be leaders of their own professional development. The founder, Peggy McIntosh, assumes that they can. Several other defining assumptions underlay the original vision and have proven durable over the life of the project. One is that teachers labor under a set of inequities (or exemptions from inequity, like systemic privilege) emerging from their personal pasts. If they can remember inequitable experiences in their lives, they can lessen inequities within their educational practices. Another assumption is that most kinds of inequity and privilege are systematically related. That is, dynamics of class, race, gender, and culture in classrooms are interwoven. Moreover, McIntosh assumes that curricula, teaching methods, and school climates, if unexamined, perpetuate all of the forms of inequity and privilege that exist in the wider society. Another assumption is that teachers can become their own counselors and equity leaders if they immerse themselves in a carefully designed, multicultural, residential program with other educators for one week and then return to their schools and provide school colleagues, over an academic year, the same kind of structure for the discussion of similar equity subjects. A further assumption is that SEED leaders can best shape their own seminars to fit their school settings, making all decisions about which books, resource materials, films, discussion topics, and interactive exercises they will use with their colleagues. Finally, the endorsement and support of the school or district's administration is necessary to make a SEED group feel both welcomed and protected. Therefore, principals or superintendents must fund and support the training of a person or two to lead a building-based seminar.

What began as an experiment 19 years ago has evolved into a solid working model that is deliberately refined year after year by a diverse group of veteran SEED staff members. The basic structure of SEED remains a week-long residential training for new SEED leaders, called New Leaders Week, followed by their own leadership of monthly school-based seminars in the following academic year for up to 20 colleagues. The standard model is that one or two teachers apply from a given school or district, participate in the New Leaders Week in the summer, and then lead or co-lead one year-long, monthly, three-hour seminar following their summer training. SEED leaders will often go on to lead seminars for several years. The Elk Grove

Unified School District departed from the usual structure by funding 12 new leaders and then requesting training for 75 more leaders to lead seminars in many different schools, thereby distributing the effects of the project district-wide, over a span of many years.

The content of the national New Leaders Week, as well as the numerous resource materials and films available to new leaders, is determined by the cooperative work of a multicultural, multiracial 14-person staff, all educators and experienced SEED leaders, most of whom have been on the core training staff for five or more years. The National SEED summer staff is comprised of nine people of color and five white people from many parts of the United States and the Philippines who meet each January to plan the following summer's program.

SEED was co-directed for 17 years by Peggy McIntosh and Emily Style, a teacher based in South Orange, New Jersey. Brenda Flyswithhawks of Santa Rosa Community College in California, a long-time summer staff person and co-manager of the summer training program, recently became the third co-director. McIntosh, Style, and Flyswithhawks collaborate in SEED management from their different locations. The project is housed in the Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, where SEED leader applications are sent out and received and many of the day-to-day operations are handled. The three co-directors collaboratively make all policy and content decisions and choose among applicants for SEED leadership training based on a number of factors, including the strength of school administrative support for the aspiring SEED leader(s).

The New Jersey SEED Branch and the Minnesota SEED Program have basically followed the national SEED Project structure, with their own directors and staff, providing their own New Leaders Weeks—New Jersey for nine years and Minnesota for fourteen years to date. The 75 new Elk Grove SEED leaders funded by the Lucent Technologies Foundation were trained in all three New Leaders Week programs. In all cases, leaders engaged in an intensive, multicultural, residential New Leaders Week program carefully crafted with the ideal of supporting teachers to become seminar facilitators with respect for their own developing cultural knowledge and the knowledge of others.

Strategies in all three New Leaders Weeks are similar and rest on the use of ground rules for the behavior and attitudes of participants. They draw on “SEED balances,” including “the balance of the scholarship on the shelves with the scholarship in the selves.” Other “balances” that guide SEED training templates include individual and systemic understanding, authority and humility, as well as Emily Style’s metaphor of “Curriculum as Window and Mirror.” They also draw on Peggy McIntosh’s theories of privilege systems, feelings of fraudulence, and interactive phases of personal development with regard to gender and race. All three New Leaders Weeks improve or enhance the new leaders’ abilities to see gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, and culture systemically. All three enable leaders-in-training to engage in deeply personal work in a group setting, made possible by a method of brief round-the-circle “Serial Testimonies” and other interactive, narrative-based processes. All three prepare new leaders to organize, recruit for, and facilitate their own school-based voluntary seminars. In recent years, more and more parents, including those in Elk Grove, as well as college teachers from all over the United States, have come to New Leaders Weeks to prepare for facilitating their own seminars.

Following the three New Leaders Weeks, SEED Project staff members support new leaders throughout their first year of seminar leadership. All leaders have access to the SEED video lending libraries in Wisconsin and New England and the SEED book collection that is on display during the summer trainings and available for loan. They also receive the quarterly newsletter, which contains their testimonies on how their first-year seminars are developing. All receive abundant resource materials throughout the year to add to the 20 to 30 books they received during the summer. Minnesota and New England have mid-year meetings for all area SEED leaders, past and present. Any new leader may call any staff members during the seminar year for support, mentoring, and advice on facilitation. In Elk Grove, additional support for SEED leaders is provided by the monthly leaders meetings voluntarily offered by Dr. Odie Douglas, Kathy Orihuela, and Francie Teitelbaum.

The SEED Project has been a success in attracting both educators who wish to lead SEED seminars and those who, in turn, wish to enroll in them. Educators have spent over 30,000 teacher-years participating in

year-long, monthly SEED seminars in schools across the United States and the world. Considering how busy teachers are and how many demands schools place on their energy, time, and attention, this figure is striking. Why should teachers undertake SEED work? They say that they sign up and continue for one or more school years to discuss equity and diversity in curricula, teaching methods, and school climates because SEED processes draw on their own stories and, in effect, give them back to themselves. SEED seminars do not treat teachers like neutral pass-throughs who simply need to learn new skills to “apply” in the classroom. They reorient educators to the social worlds in the schools and in their own psyches. A greater coherence results through the balance of inner-directed and outer-focused discussion. The project encourages educators to become more committed to education as growth and development rather than gate-keeping. Seminars further critical thinking about how dynamics of race, class, gender, and power play out in schools and society.

The SEED Project has learned that the deeper educators go into matters of their own experience of inequity and privilege the greater their capacity to lead others in this exploration. And the more carefully they have been “held” by mentoring adults in the understanding of difficult power dynamics the more able they are to provide a “holding container” for the development of other adults and young people. These learnings have become convictions that guide the policy and practice of the SEED Project. SEED leaders should understand that people develop at their own speeds. No one can expect either leaders or participants to be at the same places in their awareness or effectiveness. The process should accommodate many kinds of learners with many degrees of openness, as schooling itself should, while holding out the belief that all people have some capacity to learn and grow from the revealed humanity of others. At the same time, the theoretical frameworks of McIntosh, Style, and others involved in U.S. school reform can inform and hasten the development of those who hold little hope for schools as equitable places and who especially respond to intellectual frameworks for understanding how education can change.

What is the place of the SEED Project among other U.S. educational reforms of the late-20th century? It is both similar and dissimilar to other reforms. The term “transformational professional

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development” categorizes SEED within various types of reform. Transformative professional development differs from informative or skills-based professional development in that it’s assumption that teachers must change in deep ways if schools are to change fundamentally. Transformative professional development does not separate personal development from professional development; rather, it seeks to change people from the inside. Supportive, educator-led seminars extending over time are long-term interventions that can simultaneously carry on the professional and personal development of educators.

In addition, SEED is one of the few professional development programs for teachers that has social justice as a core value. It assumes that teachers, like all citizens, have been wounded by inequitable systems and that understanding these wounds will help them create teaching and learning spaces in which all students feel that they belong and can learn. SEED modes explicitly address power dynamics. The summer SEED staff tries to lead in a collaborative manner, using a horizontal management style to model for new leaders a desirable lateral approach to professional development for their own schools and help them facilitate discussion among their students.

Finally, SEED remains distinctive in preparing teachers to lead their own professional development with colleagues and in assuming that equity leadership is best developed by people in their own school workplaces. It posits that teachers can become leaders through deep examination of the politics of schooling, in both themselves and the wider society. Educators and parents come into their own when they are supported in finding that their self-knowledge can become a powerful guide and builder of capacity for courageous educational leadership in matters of equity and diversity.

**Peggy McIntosh, Ph.D.**

*Founder and Co-director,*

National SEED Project on Inclusive Curriculum  
(Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity)

May 2005

## INTRODUCTION

The student population of Elk Grove School District in the Sacramento Valley of California has changed dramatically in the last decade. New families pour into the valley, drawn by economic opportunity, a suburban lifestyle, and seemingly perpetual blue skies. Among these families are many recent immigrants seeking variations on the American Dream. What was once a relatively homogeneous population has become a rich pastiche of cultures and languages. Elk Grove has emerged as one of the fastest growing school districts in the nation, with its student population more than doubling between 1983 and 1995.

### Elk Grove Unified School District

- Encompasses 320 square miles, about 1/3 of Sacramento County
- Serves approximately 56,000 students
- Currently has 54 schools, including 14 Title I schools
- Includes a 20% population of students who are English Language learners and who speak over 80 languages
- Houses students from 92 countries
- Increases district enrollment by 2,500 students each year
- Projects 80,000 students by 2010

Beginning with one teacher committed to ensuring equitable learning experiences for the increasingly diverse students in her school, a network has developed in Elk Grove in partnership with SEED, an acronym for Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity. This national professional development initiative has created a markedly democratic approach to ensuring equitable and inclusive strategies for teaching and learning.

The foundational idea of SEED (McIntosh 1998; Style, 1998) posits that responding to diverse students' needs requires educators to actively, collaboratively, and consciously discuss and investigate both multiple human perspectives and equitable educational approaches. Thus, SEED holds yearly summer workshops in which educators explore their own identities and experiences, as well as multicultural and gender-fair educational strategies, and learn to become seminar leaders in their schools. They then return to

their local schools and districts and recruit colleagues to join in a year-long series of monthly seminars to engage in the same work. SEED learning communities have at their heart a normative, rather than instrumental, vision for schooling, based on both an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1993)—every human being matters and deserves to be heard and respected—and an ethic of justice (Kohlberg, 1981)—every human being ought to have equitable access to quality public education.

As of July 2005, 103 Elk Grove educators have attended the SEED New Leaders summer workshops, making the district, with the generous support of the Lucent Technologies Foundation, the first in the country to incorporate SEED strategies at the district level. Elk Grove SEED leaders have managed to engage a cumulative total of 1,936 Elk Grove educators in monthly seminars focused on issues of equity and diversity in the eight school years between 1997 and 2005. All SEED seminar leaders and participants are volunteers. Although leaders agree to facilitate a seminar for only one year, a majority of these individuals and their seminar members continue to meet.

### Studying SEED's impact in Elk Grove

With generous support from the Lucent Technologies Foundation, a research team coordinated by the Collaborative Inquiry and Development Group at the University of Southern Maine conducted a retrospective study on the impact of SEED in Elk Grove. In keeping with the spirit of SEED endeavors, the researchers worked closely with Elk Grove and national SEED leaders, using an adaptation of a "Learning History" approach (Roth & Kleiner, 1996). This design attempts to capture stories of change efforts and their impact on educators' thinking and practice, curricula, school culture and organizational structures, students' learning and experience of school, and families. The resulting history is a learning tool for participants and a vehicle for disseminating the lessons of their work to a broader audience.

By initially mapping a project timeline with the Elk Grove SEED Advisory Group, the team conducted extensive interviews, focus groups, and observations to capture participants' stories. Research team members attended the SEED winter conference in Elk Grove and conducted follow-up interviews with project leaders. In addition, Elk Grove educators collected examples of curricula from SEED classrooms.

**In keeping with the spirit of SEED endeavors, the researchers worked closely with Elk Grove and national SEED leaders, using an adaptation of a "Learning History" approach (Roth & Kleiner, 1996).**

Following an intensive data analysis process, the research team identified key themes that structure this draft report. After meeting with SEED leaders and participants in Elk Grove in August 2004, the team revised this document based on feedback and emerging insights gained through that dialogue.

<b>Time</b>	<b>Activities</b>
<b>July-Aug. '03</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>planning with Elk Grove and National SEED leaders</i></li> <li>• <i>meeting with SEED leadership group in Elk Grove to review/revise draft plan, develop details, and map project history</i></li> </ul>
<b>Sept.-Oct.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>intensive interviews, focus groups, and observations in Elk Grove</i></li> </ul>
<b>Oct.-Dec.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>transcription of audiotapes and notes</i></li> </ul>
<b>Dec. '03-Jan. '04</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>data analysis by individual research team members</i></li> </ul>
<b>Feb.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>research team meeting; collective analysis, identification, and testing of themes</i></li> </ul>
<b>Feb.-July</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>writing and review</i></li> <li>• <i>draft to Elk Grove participants for review</i></li> </ul>
<b>August</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>review meeting in Elk Grove</i></li> </ul>
<b>Sept. '04-July '05</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>revisions based on feedback</i></li> </ul>
<b>Aug. '05-Sept. '05</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>final review by project leaders</i></li> </ul>
<b>Dec. '05</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>final version completed</i></li> </ul>

The research team conducted individual and focus-group interviews with nearly 100 SEED leaders and participants and observed meetings and other activities. The team analyzed nearly 400 pages of interview transcripts and field notes and reviewed other relevant documents and artifacts in preparing this report. We recognize that we cannot do justice to the depth and complexity of SEED participants' experiences, but we hope that this document conveys the story in a way that provides a frame for meaningful dialogue and learning that may help take the work into its next era in Elk Grove.

### **Structure of This Report**

This report includes a history of SEED work in Elk Grove, as documented by project leaders; identifies both promising practices that have grown out of SEED seminars and ways in which SEED links to and is woven within other district initiatives; and relates participants' experiences through dialectical themes that emerged from our reading of the data. A final section looks both back and ahead, addressing possibilities and realities and including questions and recommendations for consideration. We also include a bibliography of works cited.

### **On Issues of Language and Representation**

In an attempt to document changes experienced by SEED participants, we have selected representative voices from interviews, focus groups, and other data sources. Each of the selected voices represents the degree to which SEED practices create change—often unanticipated—among participants. In some cases, we include gender, race, sexual orientation, or other relevant affiliation in order to underscore the degree of change experienced by the speaker. We chose voices based on the power of the stories as discerned by the documenters; any disproportionate inclusion of similar voices based on gender, race, ethnicity, and so forth is unintentional and does not suggest greater or lesser participation among the referenced group.

## I. THE GROWTH OF SEED IN ELK GROVE

Educators often consider middle school teacher Kathy Orihuela the “mother” of SEED in Elk Grove. After attending a conference on multicultural education in 1997, Kathy and her colleagues at James Rutter Middle School began exploring issues related to discrepant patterns of academic success among students of varying backgrounds. She read of SEED in a state grant-program report and, that summer participated in national SEED training.

Kathy found the national SEED seminar to be a profound experience. She was “stunned” by the ideas and interactions, which started to reshape her perspective of the experiences and needs of multicultural learners. Eager to engage her colleagues in SEED, she convened a group at her school that fall. Guidance counselor Nicole Brown-Umi was a member of that first SEED seminar and a long-time advocate of culturally responsive education. Nicole joined Kathy in making presentations about SEED to secondary administrators in the district. Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Odie Douglas attended one of the presentations and was struck by the power of Kathy and Nicole’s message. He was intrigued with how SEED approaches teachers’ professional development by tapping into their lived experiences and with how the SEED project engages them intellectually.

Inspired by the presentation, Dr. Douglas contacted SEED co-director Peggy McIntosh at Wellesley College to discuss Elk Grove educators’ growing interest in the project. From then on, Odie became instrumental in “taking SEED to a place that would not otherwise have been possible” (SEED participant interview). Odie secured funding so that he and three staff members could attend SEED New Leaders Week during the summer of 1998; Rutter Middle School counselor Nicole Brown-Umi, Florin Elementary school psychologist Manuel Penaloza, and Elk Grove High School English teacher Francie Teitelbaum signed on. Each recruited colleagues and led a seminar when they returned to their schools. With Kathy, this quartet has provided leadership for SEED as it has grown in Elk Grove.

During the 1998-1999 school year, the Lucent Technologies Foundation invited college presidents to propose collaborative college-school projects. Well aware of Elk Grove’s interest in training significant numbers of SEED facilitators, Peggy McIntosh and Odie Douglas successfully responded to the RFP (request for proposals). The Lucent grant award provided resources to formalize the SEED initiative in the district and supported the training of 75 additional SEED seminar leaders over three years. By 2005, thirty-seven schools and programs had active SEED seminars:

**By 2005, thirty-seven schools and programs had active SEED seminars: Anna Kirchgater, Charles Mack, Elitha Donner, Ellen Feickart, Elliot Ranch, Foulks Ranch, Herman Leimbach, Irene B. West, Isabel Jackson, John Ehrhardt, John Reith, Kennedy, Maola Beitzel, Prairie, Raymond Case, Roy Herburger, Sierra Enterprise, Stone Lake, and Union House Elementary Schools; Harriet Eddy, James Rutter, Joseph Kerr, Samuel Jackman, and Toby Johnson Middle Schools; Calvine, Elk Grove, Florin, Franklin, Laguna Creek, Las Flores, Monterey Trail, Sheldon, Valley, and William Daylor High Schools; and Adult Education Programs, Learning Support Services, Administrators Groups, and Community SEED Group.**

Year	Trained SEED Leaders	Number of Participants
1997-1998	1	25
1998-1999	4	70
1999-2000	12	181
*2000-2001	25	337
*2001-2002	25	440
*2002-2003	25	423
2003-2004	4	225
2004-2005	4	235
2005 (end of July)	3	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>1936 **</b>

Source: Elk Grove SEED

\* Lucent grant funding.

\*\* Cumulative total. Some participants who were members of SEED seminars longer than two years have been counted more than once.

Anna Kirchgater, Charles Mack, Elitha Donner, Ellen Feickart, Elliot Ranch, Foulks Ranch, Herman Leimbach, Irene B. West, Isabel Jackson, John Ehrhardt, John Reith, Kennedy, Maola Beitzel, Prairie, Raymond Case, Roy Herburger, Sierra Enterprise, Stone Lake, and Union House Elementary Schools; Harriet Eddy, James Rutter, Joseph Kerr, Samuel Jackman, and Toby Johnson Middle Schools; Calvine, Elk Grove, Florin, Franklin, Laguna Creek, Las Flores, Monterey Trail, Sheldon, Valley, and William Daylor High Schools; Learning Support Services, and Community SEED Group. SEED groups formed in the district's Adult Education Programs, within participating schools, and among community members. SEED has also proven its "portability" to new schools as SEED leaders move from one school to another and

introduce SEED to their new colleagues. Moreover, a group for administrators in the district has formed.

The grant also supported the development of a SEED network in the district. Elementary schools teamed up to form seminars. SEED leaders and participants began sharing SEED events, strategies, and curricula with their colleagues and at staff and department meetings. SEED breakout sessions occurred as part of district-wide professional development days, an annual SEED conference began, and monthly seminars became available to all SEED leaders. Project leaders made presentations to a number of local and statewide organizations, attended national SEED conferences, and worked with a number of other local initiatives to engage students, parents, and community members and address curricula and standards.

**“SEED has really transformed me in terms of connections with people that I work with, since this career is an isolating profession ...”**

### *The SEED Model in Elk Grove*

- *“SEED for me, initially, from the very first night, felt uncomfortable and awkward. I wasn't really sure what to expect...”*
- *“It transformed into a really profound part of my teaching and my life and the connection I have with my colleagues because of learning about them personally...”*
- *“When I see people I've been through SEED with, it's just completely a new experience than if I see someone on campus that I have not been in a SEED group with...”*
- *“It's been huge for me personally to look at myself and my own personal biases and how I interact with kids on a daily basis...”*

When speaking about their experiences, a surprising number of SEED participants describe them as initially “uncomfortable,” “scary,” “risky,” “painful,” “overwhelming,” and even “shocking.” Yet most also claim that, eventually, SEED participation produced profound changes in their own thinking, their relationships with students and colleagues, and their work as educators. As documenters aware of how difficult it is to change minds and schools, we wanted to know why they find this experience so life altering.

To observe a SEED seminar from the outside is to see a group of educators, usually sitting in a circle, listening attentively and silently while one person in the circle talks. Often, circles convene and close with “serial

testimony,” wherein members take turns speaking on a proposed topic, answering a common question, sharing an experience, voicing an opinion, or describing a problem. Other times, the group may voice responses to a common reading, video, or presentation. SEED seminars are both strongly relational and highly intellectual. They attest to what learning theorists (Belenky et al., 1986; National Research Council, 1999; Resnick, 1989) have been saying: Meaningful learning occurs in relational contexts.

What is remarkably rare about SEED interactions is that leaders structure them to create a respectful, caring audience, not to “win” over or persuade others. Seminars focus on scholarship in teaching, learning, and curricula. They are gatherings where educators

encounter ideas that help them stretch, grow, and innovate. Wisely, however, they also create the caring, respectful collegial relationships necessary for participants to honestly express themselves and take the risks needed to rethink, revise, and transform their professional practices (Elbow, 1993). Most SEED participants find themselves listening attentively and non-judgmentally, silently weighing what they're hearing. As much as possible, participants suspend their own perspectives while empathically "trying on" those of their colleagues. Speakers learn through this opportunity to articulate their thoughts; listeners' horizons widen as they entertain them.

Despite the civility that characterizes it, this process is not always peaceful and certainly not uncomplicated, largely due to the substantive nature of the exchanges. McIntosh, in her Foreword to this report, refers to SEED relationships as "containers" in which human beings may search within their own experiences for themes of privilege and oppression, connect these to systemic forces, and mentor others as they do the same. She wants to see this process happen not simply to create harmonious relationships but also because overwhelming evidence shows that learning flourishes in the context of such relationships.

From what we observed, many SEED groups operate like a specific type of container—a crucible. They cordon off space and time for people to come together, in face-to-face and open dialogue, to exchange authentic and respectful perspectives on potentially divisive issues. Voices are variously confrontational, ignorant, conciliatory, wise, myopic, oblivious, hesitant, and courageous. Cumulatively, however, these perspectives—despite inherent tensions and conflicts—almost always galvanize a group into a more conscious, respectful, and insightful community—a community dedicated to creating classroom and school environments where *all* children can truly learn. In every group we observed, participants broached potentially incendiary topics like exclusion, oppression, and injustice, exploring the subtle and insidious forms they take in relationships and institutions. They cried, laughed, soothed, and confronted one another. Often, despite increasing recognition of the misunderstandings and injustices surrounding them, they dared collectively to conjure and then work toward a better world for their students.

McIntosh is right. SEED relationships are containers: for raw emotions, honest questions, painful memories, direct confrontations, bold exposure, aching confessions, intellectual questioning, and research-based innovations for children's learning. Paradoxically, however, SEED interactions not only hold but also open. SEED relationships invite accounts of personal experiences typically denied entry to most professional settings. We heard, for instance, several African American women unapologetically and angrily expose racist social practices hampering their work and rendering them fearful for students. We heard gay men both adamantly refuse the shame that some in the surrounding community attempt to foist on them and vow to protect *all* children from similar prejudices. We listened to a South Asian teacher recount her personal struggle to be recognized, illuminating in the process ways that students of color and their parents occupy the margins of education. We documented the outrage of an incredulous Hispanic teacher describing how so many of his colleagues outside SEED simply refuse to see the relationship between class biases and academic performance.

SEED exchanges are not simply about opportunities to recall experiences with injustice, however. We also heard participants confront themselves. Several educators openly confessed that, "before SEED," they were blind and deaf to their own privilege. One European American explained that the racist and sexist jokes he heard from family and friends seemed "normal" and "acceptable" before he found SEED. A European American woman explained that, before SEED, she thought that claiming to be "colorblind" proved she could not be a racist; once in SEED, however, she recognized "colorblindness" as not only an impossibility but also disrespectful of human diversity. She came to face her own racism. An African American woman talked openly about how "hopeless" she thought it was to help most white people "get it"—how she simply wrote them off—until she found SEED and witnessed firsthand white educators choosing painful introspection over comforting denial. Several white participants, awakening to the importance of becoming "white allies," condemned their own past choices to observe from the sidelines while others struggled against inequities. An African American man confronted his own homophobia, a position he had believed was "moral" before he discovered SEED.

**SEED relationships invite accounts of personal experiences typically denied entry to most professional settings.**



**“I used to let the jokes go by, not wanting to be the person, the conversation stopper. Not wanting to have conflict has been my main thing. But you can’t just let the jokes go by anymore [after SEED participation] because you realize that it’s not just a joke...”**

There is no doubt that the airing of multiple perspectives in Elk Grove SEED groups is deeply educative for participants as they raise their voices, honor their experiences, and weigh them across those of others. As one participant told us, “I didn’t really see myself until I finally realized why others were so frustrated with me.” Yet these are not the only processes that make SEED groups crucibles for transformation. Participants also share texts—books, videos, presentations, web pages, and so forth. They learn theories about curricula, pedagogy, institutional change, and the relationship between the individual and the systemic. They swap ideas about curricula and instructional strategies. They develop intellectual tools for rethinking current social conditions and imagining better ones. They come to see that transformation toward a more just world must happen on multiple levels—individual, relational, institutional, and cultural—and all are connected. And they take seriously all the accumulating scholarship describing what it takes to create learning environments where K-12 children truly have opportunities to learn.

Repeatedly, we heard SEED participants use theory to analyze oppressive dilemmas that they, their students, or their colleagues faced. During one interview, for example, an ESL teacher analyzed how teachers and administrators judge students of color differently than white students for the same behavior.

He described how white teachers take a “fall-back position” of blaming their students’ lack of progress on “baggage” or “socioeconomic issues,” drawing on stereotypes even when they could not possibly fit a particular student’s background. Once he recognized that “these ideas are just so pervasive and they invade our thinking so much,” he found himself taking on much more responsibility than he had intended:

Well, I’m not very pushy or confrontational. I used to let the jokes go by, not wanting to be the person, the conversation stopper. Not wanting to have conflict has been my main thing. But you can’t just let the jokes go by anymore [after SEED participation] because you realize that it’s not just a joke—that it has this huge iceberg underneath the water implication. Letting jokes go by, letting small things go by, you can’t do that anymore. And that’s the hardest part for me, is having conflict.

Recognition of that “iceberg”—recognition that oppression and privilege are embedded deeply, not only in the structures of this society and all its institutions but also in the consciousness of all of its inhabitants—seems to change the way Elk Grove participants see and experience their world, and it also seems to compel them to change it because such conditions are toxic for children’s learning.

### *Visible Results*

SEED’s impact in Elk Grove has occurred on multiple levels, from strengthening the district’s efforts to increase educational equity for students to developing more inclusive relationships with families. These “visible results” (Roth & Kleiner, 1996) are evident in programs, activities, and practices throughout the district.

Assistant Superintendent Dr. Odie Douglas views SEED as an umbrella for integrating and strengthening a number of initiatives working toward the district’s goals of achieving equity and academic excellence for

every student. He recognizes that reaching these goals cannot simply be a matter of implementing new curricula, programs, or policy; it also requires complex, systemic efforts. He and Elk Grove SEED leaders, therefore, work to infuse SEED approaches into a number of existing and new efforts, including student outreach and support, professional learning, student aspirations and academic achievement, post-secondary outreach and partnerships, and curricula and standards. We outline examples of each of these goals below.



## STUDENT OUTREACH AND SUPPORT

- A Tolerance Education grant used the SEED model as its basis. Representative students and faculty advisors from every secondary school site worked together in “Teens for Tolerance” groups to address the needs of diverse students in their schools. Two groups visited the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, a transformative experience for many. Teens for Tolerance groups headed by SEED facilitators have continued even after the grant ended.
- Mentoring, peer-counseling programs, and conflict mediation have improved with the integration of SEED practices.
- Unity Days had occurred at high schools in the past, but SEED impacted the authenticity of conversations that take place. Peer counselors now facilitate Unity Days.
- Dr. Odie Douglas instituted the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Tour to take African American students to visit historically black schools. SEED seminar leaders disseminate information about this opportunity within schools.
- Culture Clubs on secondary campuses are often advised by SEED seminar leaders and can more easily address tensions that arise.
- GSAs (Gay-Straight Alliances) and support groups for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) students ensure a safe climate for these adolescents.



## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

In addition to joining SEED seminars in their schools, educators have many other professional learning opportunities available to them through the Elk Grove SEED network, including:

- Saturday seminars related to GESA (Generating Expectations for Student Achievement) and TESA (Teacher Expectations for Student Achievement) that contextualize and increase the authenticity of efforts in these areas.
- World of Difference—an Anti-Defamation League program sponsored by SEED.
- School site-level workshops facilitated by SEED leaders for the entire staff, including advisor-advisee programs and anti-bullying programs for staff and students together.
- Teens for Tolerance—student-facilitated staff discussions about issues of equity and diversity.
- Civic values and ethics education—SEED offers professional development credit under this category.
- *The Color of Fear* (Mun Wah, 1994)—A powerful film shown to staff before SEED came to Elk Grove that generated angst that “had no place to go.” SEED facilitators lead whole-staff discussions of the film and offer showings after school and on Saturdays. This film has become embedded in most first-year SEED seminars.



## STRENGTHENING STUDENT ASPIRATIONS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

SEED has given rise to several efforts to increase student aspirations and achievement in Elk Grove. In addition to the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Tour previously mentioned, other examples include:

- Increasing access to Advanced Placement (AP) courses. Several high schools have moved to open enrollment for AP courses or to combining Honors/AP courses.
- Working with the College Board on “Building Success through Vertical Teams” in English, social sciences, and mathematics to increase student achievement.
- A district analysis of AP/Honors enrollments to ensure that this data mirrors the ethnic and gender demographics of each school. The data is reported back to the schools, which then encourage teachers to examine it in light of their assumptions about and expectations of students.



## POST-SECONDARY OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIPS

SEED has been central in several programs that strengthen students’ interest in and access to post-secondary educational opportunities, including:

- The Early Academic Outreach Program through the University of California System, wherein on-site college counselors offer counseling and regional classes such as academic writing for students of color and poverty.
- AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination), a college readiness program for students who are academically middle-range, prospective first-generation college attenders. It includes academic support and college field trips.
- The MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Association) Program, which supports minorities and women entering these fields.



## CURRICULA AND STANDARDS

SEED does not have student curricula; instead it encourages educators to examine ways in which to create school and classroom environments and practices that support all students’ access to curricula and success in school. SEED is well aligned with the California Standards for the Teaching Profession, as noted in the following table:

## ALIGNMENT OF SEED OBJECTIVES WITH CALIFORNIA STANDARDS FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION

<p><b>Standard One: Develop and practice strategies for engaging and supporting all students in learning.</b></p> <p>SEED seminar strategies include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• active listening</li> <li>• sharing stories</li> <li>• collaborative writing (e.g. dialogue poems)</li> <li>• discussion strategies</li> <li>• resources which address multiple perspectives and cultures</li> <li>• journaling</li> <li>• examination of data</li> </ul>	<p><b>Standard Two: Develop and practice strategies for creating and maintaining effective environments for student learning.</b></p> <p>SEED seminars model the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• group-developed ground rules for discussion and behavior</li> <li>• attention to physical learning environment (e.g. seating arrangements &amp; décor)</li> <li>• ongoing attention to participants' involvement, comfort, and safety</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard Three: Develop and practice strategies for understanding and organizing subject matter for student learning.</b></p> <p>SEED seminar materials and resources seek to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• illustrate the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives into curriculum</li> <li>• provide “windows and mirrors” for all participants</li> <li>• promote ways for participants to make subject matter accessible to all students</li> </ul>	<p><b>Standard Four: Develop and practice strategies for planning instruction and designing learning experiences for all students.</b></p> <p>SEED seminar discussions focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• acknowledging and bridging the achievement gap</li> <li>• analyzing relevant research and its classroom implications</li> <li>• recognizing diverse learning styles</li> <li>• sharing “best practices” for meeting the needs of all students</li> </ul>
<p><b>Standard Five: Develop and practice strategies for assessing student learning.</b></p> <p>SEED seminar discussions support staff in their individual efforts to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• articulate learning goals which support the belief that all students can succeed</li> <li>• examine alternative assessments to measure student achievement</li> <li>• utilize assessment results to guide instruction</li> </ul>	<p><b>Standard Six: Support participants' development as professional educators.</b></p> <p>SEED seminars provide an ongoing opportunity for continued personal and collaborative reflection on teaching practices.</p>

### Elk Grove SEED

Some of the “visible results” we describe, such as disaggregating Honors and AP enrollment data to examine equity of access with regard to gender and ethnicity, are examples of how educators are acting upon their increased awareness of the embedded inequities in the ways schools provide access to challenging curricula and related opportunities. There are also countless examples cited by individual teachers of ways that they choose materials or modify instruction to enhance students’ access to learning opportunities in alignment with state standards and district equity goals (see section II, “Emerging Themes”).

Teachers take steps to engage and support students as learners through a variety of means described throughout this report. Some examples of steps that educators take to create inclusive learning environments include:

- Making sure that posters, books, and other materials reflect the diversity of the students.
- Ensuring that out-of-class assignments are fair to all students. For example, redesigning a project so that the purchase of materials is not required for success, thus ensuring that low-income students are not at a disadvantage in completing the assignment.
- Adapting assignments to make them more inclusive. A middle school teacher modified a project that asked students to choose and research a scientist to instead focus on “A Scientist Like Me,” so that students of diverse ethnicities could identify with and perhaps see themselves in the role of scientist.
- Setting clear expectations about civility.
- Addressing conflict in a proactive manner and seeing such occasions as learning opportunities.

Educators also act to include families as essential collaborators through inviting them to and engaging them in activities focused on students’ learning and other efforts:

- In an elementary school with a high number of Spanish-speaking families, the principal arranged for an after-school Spanish course for staff.
- One parent, recognizing the value of SEED seminars for educators, started a SEED-like group for community members.
- In another elementary school, cafeteria and front-office staff participated in SEED seminars and made great efforts to make all families feel welcome in the school.

There are many examples in this report of ways in which Elk Grove educators work to create more inclusive, equitable learning environments for students and their families and also contribute to the district’s efforts to “achieve educational equity and academic excellence for every student.”

## II. EMERGING THEMES

The more we delved into SEED work in Elk Grove, the more we realized the complexity of the project. Certainly, Odie Douglas, Francie Teitelbaum, and Kathy Orihuela reported all along an intention to create more harmonious and respectful human relationships in the district's SEED groups and beyond, but they want more than that. Very much in the spirit of Peggy McIntosh (1998) and Emily Style's (1998) work, they continually urge SEED participants to confront social injustices on at least three levels: individual, institutional, and systemic. They attempt to create experiences that help participants first recognize and then work against patterns of *stereotyping*, which culminate in unfair and delimiting generalizations on the basis of race, class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, physical disability, and so forth. They confront individual and group *prejudices* that entail uninformed and negative judgments about human beings even before interacting with them. They read, report, and hear experiences about *discrimination* that deny or constrain human rights and opportunities. Finally, they challenge forms of *oppression*, which curtail economic and social mobility and lie deeply embedded in the very social institutions and structures that sustain this society.

These are, of course, sweeping and insidious forces that can and do subvert children's learning. During our individual and focus-group interviews, participants told us repeatedly that they had come to recognize a clearer picture of the pervasive and interlocking barriers to equity that exist not only in their local district and community but also in the larger U.S. culture. This recognition results in a commitment to *do* something, to work toward change. In this section of the report, we discuss the costs and benefits that accompany such a commitment. Such work can buoy those involved with the exhilaration of shared purpose, but it also places a heavy burden on those willing to struggle against deeply entrenched but often invisible assumptions, attitudes, and behavior. Elk Grove SEED leaders believe that public schools have the potential to open constructive and hopeful possibilities for children if school personnel recognize all students as valuable, worthy, and capable; critically interrogate their own consciousness and practices as well as institutional and cultural norms; create alliances with others interested in staunching oppressive educational practices; and speak and act publicly in the best interests of all students.

Creating such alliances is not easy work. Even in more successful SEED seminars, we discovered that strong divisions of “we” and “they,” “victims” and “victimizers” can develop. Nevertheless, as Audre Lorde (2004) attests, victimization cannot and should not be arranged along a continuum from least to worst. All oppression can be devastating and is related to democracy's failures to live up to its own ideals. Over time, participants in the most successful groups overcome initial divisions and rally around a common understanding—the right of every student to be treated with respect and provided access to an equitable education. More importantly, they discover a common purpose: to commit to an ongoing process of transforming themselves, their personal relationships, and the education they provide in order to fulfill that vision.

This commitment obviously involves a process of raising consciousness. Over and over again, however, participants claim that it is futile to set out to change people or even to expand their horizons. As one informant states, “We're not trying to change anybody's minds; we just want to have a conversation.” Another comments that SEED participants come to the “understanding that you can't make people change, just provide them with the experience so that they reflect and maybe change by themselves.”

The process takes, then, a much subtler form. It requires embedding principles of justice, fairness, respect, and care into the social practices of the groups. For instance, successful SEED groups are strenuously and deliberately inclusive, providing opportunities for each participant to speak and be heard. They model and incorporate participatory and deliberative democratic interactions (Gutmann, 2001). Participants learn what it means to truly attend to—truly listen to—other human beings. An interesting paradox emerges over time: on the one hand, participants develop a wider and deeper vision of the world, yet this experience does not culminate in them feeling “smarter.” Rather, they feel a profound humility about all they have yet to learn. In other words, they simultaneously develop greater self-knowledge and confidence and also greater motivation to learn about—and to act in the name of—more inclusive education.

The SEED process is spiraling and iterative. People learn the same lessons repeatedly in ever more profound ways. They speak and listen on an extremely personal level but make connections to wider cultural patterns. The conversations become transformative in a

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Despite the constantly shifting ground, those who are affected deeply by SEED work seem to develop and grow in a spiraling upward path regarding their understanding of the responses to human differences.

double-looping manner, involving both critical self-reflection and critical dialogue. People find that what they hear in their SEED groups alters them internally and consequently affects what they choose to say next, which then changes the group. Fueled by candid conversations, group members widen perspectives and deepen insights as they grow in knowledge about diversity and equity and explore the implications of this knowledge for their professional practices and lives.

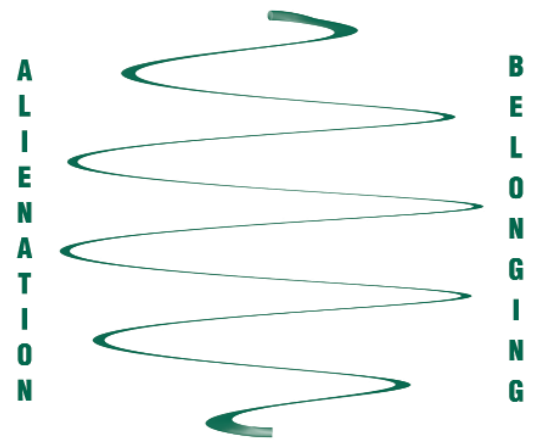
Of course, SEED groups vary in terms of impact. Not all are successful in awakening and binding participants to a commitment to inclusive education. Moreover, there are emotional costs to this work. Marilyn Frye (2004) describes how systemic oppression traps so many in a “double bind”: “One of the most characteristic and ubiquitous features of the world as experienced by oppressed people is the double bind—situations in which options are reduced to a very few and all of them expose one to penalty, censure or deprivation” (p. 49). She offers as an example women who choose to work outside the home and those who decide to work at home. The former may be congratulated on the one hand for “making it” in the public world yet be demonized for neglecting domestic or parenting duties or for choosing “unwomanly” preoccupations. The latter can be at once sentimentalized for “putting their children first” yet devalued for devoting their lives to domesticity while foregoing hard-won opportunities for women in the public sphere.

We found that those who actively and authentically participate in SEED groups and then strive to change their own work and affect the relationships around them often feel trapped by a series of double binds. Yet their experiences seem to go beyond that. In trying to describe what participants report about their struggles, we imagined a series of continua created by tension between polar opposites:

ONGOING TENSIONS	
Alienation . . . . .	Belonging
Vulnerability . . . . .	Empowerment
Revelation . . . . .	Recognition
Agency . . . . .	Reciprocity
Ambiguity . . . . .	Certainty

One after the other, participants describe experiencing a deep sense of disequilibrium as they undertake their work, as if they struggle to find a foothold while feeling the tug of polar opposites. Just as they find footing, the ground shifts beneath them. Just as they think they achieve, say, a sense of belonging, they find that they form relationships and take stands that expose them to further alienation. This loss of connection, in turn, makes them long once again for a renewed sense of belonging. Although the sting of alienation is painful, it is also instructive and motivating; although belonging to a community can be comforting, it also produces burdensome responsibilities—and these, too, become instructive and motivating. Despite the constantly shifting ground, those who are affected deeply by SEED work seem to develop and grow in a spiraling upward path regarding their understanding of the responses to human differences.

The graphic below represents the recursive nature of the work but does not capture the deepening and growing of individuals engaged in it:



We located these five continua in sifting through our data. The first continuum results from the tension between *alienation* on the one hand, and *belonging* on the other. Participants often state that they joined a SEED group because they felt alienated or witnessed others who felt that way. They seek a sense of belonging to a community with a common commitment to inclusivity. Paradoxically, although belonging to this new group often creates a sense of belonging, it also exacerbates feelings of alienation,

which happens sometimes because of interpersonal difficulties within SEED communities themselves and/or because of tensions between SEED communities and the world outside of SEED.

A second continuum involves the struggle to overcome a sense of *vulnerability* in order to achieve a sense of *empowerment*. Participants, for instance, often feel empowered by their SEED experiences, but they are also vulnerable during their interactions within the group. Moreover, association with SEED work sometimes evokes hostile attitudes and deliberate actions by others to constrain SEED progress.

The third continuum entails *recognition* and *revelation*. On the one hand, many in SEED groups claim that they experience solace and comfort in having their ideas and experiences confirmed, affirmed, and shared—in short, recognized. On the other hand, they also encounter occasions of misunderstanding and disbelief—even within SEED groups and certainly from the outside. SEED exchanges expose differences; as a result, participants sometimes bump up against perspectives and experiences that disorient them and shake their complacency.

The fourth pair of opposing forces emerge as *agency* and *reciprocity*. Group members repeatedly note developing a belief that they, individually, “can make a difference” as a result of their SEED experiences, but they also undergo periods of feeling overwhelmed by individual struggles and challenges and the sense of

collective responsibility. Over time, however, most recognize that individual agency is most likely nurtured in a community of shared purpose. Moreover, they come to see that shared purpose must be nurtured by the committed action of those within the community. Knowing that others understand one’s intentions and values emboldens action for many SEED participants.

The fifth continuum involves *ambiguity* and *certainty*. Many participants report that SEED work requires them to dwell in ambiguity, be comfortable with uncertainty, and be open to alternative perspectives. Yet they also say that SEED interactions imbue them with the certainty of commitment, a desire to work against the social injustices that thwart students’ opportunities to learn and flourish as full human beings. For most SEED participants, this experience awakens an absolute commitment to act, although deciding exactly how to act often means a return to ambiguity.

The work of SEED, then, requires seesawing between comfort and discomfort, security and insecurity, knowing and not knowing. It is a matter of constant negotiation and change. As SEED leaders and participants note repeatedly, they learn to “trust the process.” The following sections flesh out participants’ perspectives regarding the experience of undertaking this work.

**The work of SEED, then, requires seesawing between comfort and discomfort, security and insecurity, knowing and not knowing. It is a matter of constant negotiation and change.**

## *Alienation and Belonging*

Central to the work of SEED is the recognition that some people and ideas play a central role in our social institutions while others are marginalized. Those who find their identities and ideas valued are likely to develop a sense of *belonging*; those who don’t frequently become *alienated*. This structure is particularly important to understand in educational institutions because, simply put, alienation impedes learning (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 1999; Noddings, 1992; Oakes et al., 2002; Ogbu, 2003; Olsen, 1998; Watson, 2003; Willis, 1981). Student achievement is most likely to happen in school cultures that value, expect, and nurture *everyone’s* learning, both students and the adults who work with them (Guskey & Huberman, 1995; Lieberman & Miller, 1992; Senge, 2000).

According to current research, learning entails the creation of meaning, a process that requires self-expression, risk-taking, relevance, and dialogue (Levine, 2003; National Research Council, 1999; Oakes et al., 2002; Resnick, 1989). Moreover, Nel Noddings (1992) argues that one of the most human of needs is to care and feel cared for in return, to have a sense of both community and personal worth. An educator who is capable of caring and being cared for attends seriously to each student and welcomes the perspectives and experiences he or she brings to the group. Such an educator creates opportunities for students to grow in *their* capacity to care and be cared for. Ultimately, this process helps students make connections between their life worlds and school



learning and engage successfully in building and sustaining strong learning communities. Moreover, in classrooms where students feel a satisfying connection to communities, they are less likely to be distracted by negative feelings and more likely to be engaged in learning activities (Gay, 2000; Levine, 2003; Noddings, 1992; Watson & Ecklen 2003; Wessler, 2003). For reasons like these, SEED educators actively seek to create a sense of *belonging* within their SEED seminars and classroom communities. They want to set a context for meaningful and lasting learning—for both students and teachers.

Wanting to create school cultures in which people can develop a sense of belonging, and knowing how to accomplish that goal can be two very different things, however. Too frequently, those outside the dominant culture experience invitations to “belong” as a call to conform (Banks, 2000; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; McIntosh, 1998; Nieto, 1999). Anxious to avoid this error, SEED participants attempt to create a sense of belonging in three concrete ways: (a) Sharing autobiographical experiences of or with exclusion and alienation, (b) reading research articles and imaginative literature on the subject, and (c) structuring seminar processes and conversations so that each person has an opportunity to teach others and learn from them. Participants discover resonances in their experiences that open up common ground; they also explore differences that build shared knowledge and enlarge the collective vision.

In successful SEED seminars, these processes surface rather than suppress conflict. Participants learn firsthand that conversations across differences can be tense and difficult, even as they enrich understandings. The non-hierarchical approach of SEED seminars, conducted with participants facing one another in a circle, both accomplishes and symbolizes inclusion and equity. Those voices and experiences, typically marginalized in other venues, disrupt conventional conversations and challenge the status quo. In the most successful seminars, there is a heightened sense of obligation to be authentic with one another because participants understand how much they need each other in order to learn and grow. At the same time, they also know that they need to challenge one another to create more respectful, inclusive, representative, and participatory learning environments for students. One participant captures the high stakes involved in this work particularly well:

Learning to recognize that we all see the world out from a particular point of view makes for a lot more effective communication. Instead of judging that person as being wrong—the emphasis of SEED is to stop and take a look at what the world looks like through the eyes [of another person.]

He also tells the story of an African American student who considered himself an outsider to the school culture. In the parking lot after school, the student was approached by a school security guard. After a confrontation, the guard called district police officers to the scene. They, in turn, instructed school officials to “pursue disciplinary action” because “you can’t talk to a district employee like that.” Instead of suspending the young man, however, the administrator sat down and talked with him, asking him to explain his perspective. The student complained that he doubted a white peer would have been similarly singled out and harassed. Looking through the eyes of the young man, the administrator said that it did not take a “stretch of the imagination” for him to recognize that the student might be right. In fact, it is a matter of public record that African American men often pay a high price for questioning authority, and that many school districts suspend young men of color in disproportionate rates.

The last thing this student needed, the administrator decided, was to be further alienated through suspension from school. Rather, he needed coping skills to “find a way to move through a society where he may encounter [similar situations] many times in his life.” Thus, the administrator reframed the experience as an object lesson, and together he and the student discussed how such incidents might be negotiated more constructively. By showing that he cared and recognized the legitimacy of the student’s anger, he helped the young man re-envision himself as a valued member of the community, someone who could make constructive choices about negotiating rules and authority in a community to which he *wanted* to belong. The administrator explains, “This happened a year ago, and he’s still with us and will be graduating, probably in the next 4-6 weeks.” At bottom, he claims, this student—and others like him—simply need to know that they are valued and welcome—that they belong.

**The non-hierarchical approach of SEED seminars, conducted with participants facing one another in a circle, both accomplishes and symbolizes inclusion and equity.**

In a similar vein, a first-grade teacher relates a story about using a SEED-like circle to help her students with literacy skills. At first, she had not allowed show-and-tell time because of “inequities about toys, etc.” She did, however, ask children to “share from [their] hearts.” As she explains,

I took that concept of SEED of the listening and waiting. Everybody got to share, every single child in my classroom. A couple of fascinating things happened. One little guy, a second-language student, brought this little tiny tablet and he pasted [on] a picture of his little brother and he brought it to share. And it was so moving. I didn't put a lot of parameters on what they could bring, except no video games or movies. There was one little girl who lost her Daddy and she brought baby pictures with pictures of her Daddy. And you know, after we started doing this, I have practically no discipline problems in my classroom. No kids tattling. So I shared at our SEED meeting and so some of the members started sharing it in their classrooms. They started their own circle of voices. The continuity was incredible, and it gives every child a voice. And it was a powerful vehicle that's related to academic standards. After all, it's oral language development, grammar, logical thinking. I can say it's academic but it's still SEED work. It gave first graders a voice and it is a SEED-like way of doing it, and it takes on a life of its own.

Despite successes like these stories, trying to create a sense of belonging in heterogeneous communities can be riddled with minefields. As Dalton (1995) explains, all human beings are psychologically wounded by cultural markers such as gender, race, class, sexual orientation, disability, and so forth. As a result—and regardless of group affiliation(s)—many become ambivalent about their personal worth and fear interchanges with those unlike themselves. SEED seminars bring to the surface discomforts like these. Some participants describe incidents in which they or others felt unsafe or marginalized within their group. Three former participants left their SEED groups because they did not feel that they could fully trust the other members; they did not believe that some members were operating in good faith, and they perceived an unwillingness on the part of some

members to critically examine either their own privilege or their sense of victimization. In other words, there are a few who develop feelings of alienation within the SEED seminars themselves.

In the end, all three former participants attribute the failure of their groups, at least in part, to skill limitations of facilitators. A good facilitator, they explain, can release voices and create a forum for difficult dialogue while also holding the group to norms of civil discourse. A good facilitator monitors the air time of each participant and redirects personal confrontations to common concerns about society and educating students. Absolutely key is the facilitator's capacity to help people understand the power of the “believing game” (Elbow, 1986), that is, making an authentic attempt to suspend one's own worldview in order to enter the perspective of another.

Occasional dissatisfaction with SEED groups is not surprising, given the fact that participants waded in dangerous waters. For many of our interviewees, the seminar was the first time they experienced a “real conversation” with a gay person or a colleague of color. One participant claims that she heard for the first time what it is like to be a white male who gets “gender bashed” in every discussion about diversity. For most, however, these experiences create more bridges than walls. Especially for people of color who have been long-engaged in social justice work, the seminars can become the equivalent of inhaling a breath of fresh air. One participant, weary from years of efforts, states that, at long last, “white people owned up to their actions.” She goes on to explain, “With that kind of attitude, I can work with this group.” Regardless of the point of entry into the circle, and despite occasional tensions, most SEED participants ultimately feel as if they belong to the community.

Even for those who benefit most, belonging to SEED comes at a cost. As one participant puts it, “being in SEED is like experiencing an earthquake; the plates have shifted and you can't go back; [the landscape] is forever altered. As much as you want to go back, it's not going to happen.” Thus, the most successful SEED groups, along with instilling a sense of belonging, take participants to a new and inescapable level of awareness. Teaching, speaking, and acting with a conscious sense of justice, equity, and caring can create hard feelings in others, and many participants end up feeling alienated from those outside SEED, including friends and family. Even as

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participants gain a sense of belonging in one area of their lives, they may become alienated in another.

As the previous SEED participant explained, there is no going back. And experiences with alienation, they learn, can be instructive. The continuous sharing of stories in SEED seminars, along with discussions around shared readings and videos, continually awaken participants to the injuries that exclusion and inequity cause. Many report increasingly visceral reactions when they witness students or colleagues victimized. Unable to turn a blind eye or deaf ear, they muster the courage to intervene. A white male counselor, for instance, talks about his “coming out” in support of disenfranchised gay and lesbian students and of writing local newspaper editorials critical of efforts to squelch SEED work in schools. He endured the wrath of politically conservative friends when he mailed a copy of Peggy McIntosh’s article on white privilege to their homes. He even changed the images on his office walls, making them more representative of the school’s demographics. In all of his efforts, he wants to signal to students, “You belong here.”

A white teacher tells a similar story of confronting childhood friends, many of whom are among the elite and powerful in Elk Grove. In the midst of a dinner party, she found herself unable to ignore racist comments and spoke out against them. Likewise, one of her SEED colleagues states that she was impelled to confront racist remarks by family members: “It took a lot of courage to be able to finally stand up to my family and grandfather.” Yet another high school teacher talks, with great pain in her voice, about the gay and lesbian students at her school who grapple not only with the usual anxieties of teenage years but also with how to negotiate the politics of their sexuality in a conservative climate. She says, “I would do everything I could to protect these kids and try to make it so that [school] is a safe place to be. Because I know in reality it really isn’t a safe place.”

There is a deep paradox involved here. Along with a strong sense of belonging to a principled community, participants sometimes experience a sense of alienation from their own pre-SEED identities. SEED seminars, according to participants, can be jarring experiences that foster questioning long-held beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions—even what once seemed like “common sense.” One white male participant tells of his experience watching *The Color of Fear* (Mun Wah, 1994), a videotaped documentary depicting nine adult

men—African American, Asian American, European American, and Latino—engaged in a searching and volatile conversation about race. He describes being horrified by what he learned about himself:

The lead character, David [a white male], the one we all cringe at...my awakening was that as much as I want to push him away and say “I’m not like him”...the training was the first chance for me to be free, finally, saying that he was part of me and I am part of him, and that there’s a lot of Davids out there and a lot of them are in positions of power.

Another participant discusses her response to the video:

During the first year, we watched *The Color of Fear*. It took me a whole year to realize that I’m the oppressor. I’ve never looked at myself as an oppressor because of the color of my skin. It was looking through someone else’s eyes at me. And it’s hard to do that. It’s hard to step out of yourself. But after watching that film and hearing the men discuss how they’re treated and how they still felt and how this is still going on...I came to realize that, even though I don’t run my life that way, when people look at me that’s what they see. I needed to be aware of that.

This vacillation between feelings of belonging and alienation, kinship and estrangement is experienced widely by SEED participants. Men talk about needing a “thick skin” to be in a group of women speaking about the inequities of gender. Teachers of color, long acquainted with prejudice in some white communities, find themselves feeling like strangers in their own communities of color. One woman of color notes, “You go to church and see things happening and put [them] into the context of SEED and say, yeah, ok, and talk about SEED at church.” Some behaviors and words, taken for granted for years, become intolerable—even if they were one’s own.

The experience of moving between alienation and belonging creates what Greene (1978) calls “wide-awakeness.” SEED participation interrupts the “mechanical round of habitual activities” (p. 42), namely, experiences of alienation in everyday existence, so that participants can awaken to exclusionary practices in the world around them, practices that

marginalize rather than educate. When people dare to talk and listen in SEED groups, they literally change the landscape of their personal and professional lives. In interview after interview, participants say that their practices changed; their relationships with colleagues and students changed; their lives changed.

In the continuous cycle of telling and hearing stories, SEED participants come to recognize a profound irony. The process of coming to *belong* sometimes makes participants feel as if they are sleeping with the proverbial enemy. In other words, people do not simply learn to reconcile with others they had once seen as quite different from them (say, a religious fundamentalist learns to find common ground with a secular humanist—a phenomenon actually occurring in several Elk Grove SEED groups), they also see that the “enemy” is not individual people, but a collection of dehumanizing and sometimes unconscious social practices. The enemy can appear in the mirror or in the eyes of a trusted colleague, parent, or spiritual leader.

Seeing through SEED eyes, then, can make the world an alienating place. Yet this circumstance only makes most participants return with greater commitment to SEED seminars. There, in the company of fellow seekers of equity, care, and justice, participants find colleagues who, at their best or at their worst, at least evidence a sustained commitment to make schools better places for students to learn. In what many describe as the “sacredness of the circle,” they find hope. They discover that it is possible to forge challenging, searching, and caring human relationships around a vision of inclusion. Thus, the image of a circle is particularly apt. It has the capacity to enfold and contain but also to create a perimeter, a boundary. On occasion, SEED participants seem to feel that they are under siege from larger social and institutional forces, but instead of “circling the wagons” they want to bring more people into their midst. According to those we interviewed, the “magic” of SEED seminars depends on a continuing capacity to bond strong communities while remaining open to newcomers, new ideas, and new practices. But therein, of course, lies yet another continuing challenge.

## *Vulnerability and Empowerment*

To explain that social inequities breed human vulnerability is to state the obvious. Feelings of vulnerability in students, particularly during the formative pre-K through 12 grades, can result in diminished opportunities and constrained futures. Students who fall victim to stereotyping, for instance, cannot experience the emotional safety necessary for successful learning and development (Levine, 2003; National Research Council, 1999; Noddings, 1992; Vygotsky, 1981) because, in no small measure, those with whom we interact mirror back to us who we are; identities are forged in the crucible of human relationships. Victims of stereotyping and prejudice are at risk of internalizing negative views of themselves (Belenky et al., 1986; Mead, 1963; Miller, 1987; Kegan, 1983; Steele, 1999; Taylor, 1994). Taylor (1994) and Gutmann (2000), however, eloquently affirm that social participation can lead to empowerment—acting in one’s own best interest, establishing common interests with others, and making constructive choices. The work of SEED aims to provide a social and educational context that stands in

opposition to discriminatory and oppressive educational practices and thereby empower those victimized by such practices.

Unfortunately, too many children develop feelings of inadequacy simply on the basis of others’ negative attitudes toward them. When students experience prejudices, their academic performance can become plagued by “stereotype threat” (Steele, 1999). Some students, when faced with a task or an expectation in school: (a) under-perform because they have internalized negative self-images and, therefore, become victims of a self-fulfilling prophesy, or (b) under-perform because they recognize that, for powerful and privileged others, what they do represents what everyone else “like them” has done or might do in the future, and the pressure of that realization overwhelms them. In short, vulnerabilities like these defeat self-confidence and disempower students as learners.

Stereotyping and prejudices do not comprise the whole threat to student learning, however. Institutional discrimination and oppression—often invisible and

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unconscious—also constrain some children's learning. For example, too many male students of color end up in remedial classes; too few girls enroll in high-status courses, particularly mathematics and technology; too many children from poor families do not take college preparatory courses; too many children with special needs do not have adequate support to thrive in mainstream classrooms; and too many gay and lesbian students do not receive adequate protection when they are bullied or teased in schools (Wessler, 2003). Predictable patterns regarding drop-out rates and academic success or failure persist. SEED participants relate that educators, too, are susceptible to the same insidious patterns, as Delpit (1995) also confirms. Even middle-class, white teachers report that allying with vulnerable students and colleagues makes them vulnerable themselves.

SEED participation seems to provide a refuge from such vulnerability. Paradoxically, it is the power of SEED seminars to expose human vulnerabilities and their consequences that sets the context for empowerment. Numerous SEED participants use words like “a safe space,” “a home,” “an anchor” to describe their SEED groups. Perhaps this is because, as one participant explains, SEED interactions teach people “to see the soul of the individual without necessarily seeing just the external, to really go inside the individual...into the heart and the experiences of a person.” Human beings in these groups can and do speak aloud about their experiences, including those involving injustices, inequities, exclusions, and discrimination.

Rather than being weighed down by these discussions, however, group members report being empowered by them. Such deep sharing awakens collective compassion and outrage, extends members' understanding of human experience, and stirs a collective commitment to protect children from similar experiences. It is SEED participants' willingness to bear witness to one another's vulnerability that paradoxically develops in them a deep sense of empowerment to change their classrooms and schools. This commitment can have profound implications for students. As one teacher says, “When you approach a child looking for what makes them move and what makes them tick, you see so much beauty.” This is precisely the kind of caring witness that can empower students as learners (Delpit, 1995; Levine, 2003; National Research Council, 1999; Nieto, 1999; Noddings, 1992).

Once SEED participants recognize that strong communities can offer empowerment as well as refuge, they have a strategy for helping students deal with a sometimes hostile environment. Many adopt the SEED seminar format for meetings in their classrooms, for instance. A white SEED teacher relates a story about helping students appreciate both “their blessings” and one another in a trusting environment. In the process, she empowers children to take center stage and speak from their own lived experiences:

Recently at my site we didn't have any heat for a week. We went to another room to get warmer. After a time, we got back to our room and the kids said, “We're so thankful we're back in our room.” We talked about an Oprah show and an idea from that show, a gratitude journal. So I decided to institute a gratitude journal. Kids said they were thankful for heat that particular day. Then a little boy from India said, “We used to live without heat all the time.” Another child said, “We used to live with rain coming through the roof.” Still another explained, “My grandma, she doesn't have a lot of food.” For awhile, they forget the nonsense and they zero in on what is so important. And maybe the kids who learn the most are the mainstream kids. Anyway, it was a nice way to end our day. Now they turn to say what they're thankful for to one another and they keep their journals.

An adult educator, also white, seeks to empower students as well.

I'm a resource teacher. I work with the adults who work with children. In my case, it's Adult Ed., so I work with those who work with adult learners. We work with...well, I can't count the different ethnicities, ages, economic levels. We're working with all sorts of people. The way SEED impacts me is that I try to ensure equity in the classroom. Like an issue that came up Friday around a grant project, a project to educate young mothers with kids. And the mothers wanted to keep their babies in class with them. And people who were part of this grant said that their babies need to go to child care and the kids need to become independent of their mothers. And one of the things I try to be sensitive to is that you have to always

remember culture and there are some reasons why some mothers want to hold onto their babies. It's in their culture, and it's not about independence for them. So we have a broad range of equity issues. We provide parenting classes, job training, and all this. . . . And it's about being willing to be a person on staff to be a voice for those people who are invisible.

Some other educators have started SEED-like groups for students in their schools, holding them at the end of the school day. The documentation team visited one of these groups in a district high school and was struck with how willing some students were to share difficult personal struggles. Their stories became catalysts for lessons in empathy, consolation, and problem solving. Students received practical, down-to-earth advice for negotiating conflict; everyone involved seemed to be learning from the problems of a few. They talked openly about problems within their peer culture and how they might improve it. Similar processes occur in adult SEED groups. As one counselor relates, “SEED really gives one practice on how to deal with the non-SEED society, on how to conduct yourself when you run into those negative mindsets.”

It is not, of course, as if vulnerability to others simply disappears; rather, SEED participants seem to understand more about accepting and/or defusing hostile situations. They learn that conflict is inevitable in SEED work. They discover that attending to others requires understanding that perspectives are deeply rooted in autobiographies. They are less likely to harshly critique or preach, yet they can still hold steadfastly to their own convictions about equity and inclusion. One participant explains: “You know you're doing SEED work when people are angry with you.” Those involved in the work of SEED come to see that they must expect anger when they work to transform school cultures, and they learn to tap into their own feelings of vulnerability in order to understand students' struggles better and to persist in their SEED work.

A practical benefit of this work involves the many resources that come with participation in SEED groups. Through their national training, SEED leaders have access to articles, poetry, stories, and other curricula ideas, including a SEED Reading Sampler they acquire during SEED leaders training. They learn about a wide range of videos, posters, music, and other materials. A wealth of resources seems to be constantly

circulating in SEED groups. Frequently, participants testify as to how these resources bolster their discussions with colleagues and administrators and enhance their work with students. Several teachers relate changes that they have made in their curricula and instruction and how they have expanded students' encounters with multicultural perspectives in their readings and visual aids. They try to provide more opportunities in their classrooms for dialogue about human differences. Some even opened up Honors courses to all students, making participation a matter of student choice and not past achievement. Such changes inevitably cause conflict but, as one educator states, SEED involvement means participants become a part of a “movement” seated in a principled community. That community seems to empower educators to take a stand and deal with the attendant fall-out.

One member of a community group, an African American parent of two children in the district, believes that SEED participation helps people “face the elephant in the room,” namely systemic discrimination, particularly racism. Because of SEED groups, he claims, more and more people seem empowered to name the problem and to speak and act against it. From participating in a SEED group, he sees a chance “to change the campus” of the local high school. He continues to serve on a parent advisory committee and regularly attends school board meetings.

During a parents' SEED group, the documentation team witnessed firsthand dialogue among parents of both sexes and diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. At the meeting, group members disclosed personal experiences with prejudice and oppression. Once again, it was the courage of group's members to name their vulnerabilities that opened the opportunity for empowerment. Once again, members of a SEED group listened carefully to tales of discrimination and oppression and spoke in solidarity to work against similar experiences happening to young people. In fact, a teacher told us that SEED empowers teachers to open up difficult conversations with students so that they can openly discuss and address some of the most painful and potentially injurious tensions in their peer culture.

We were continually struck by the level of trust and candid interaction in the groups we saw in action. Several informants state that this type of connection can only emerge when members are willing to risk personal disclosure and self-reflection. Thus, the groups solidify

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not only when members risk telling stories of oppression and discrimination but also when they seriously consider their own possible complicity with systems of social injustice. As one person says, “It [participation in SEED] touches you on that kind of level if you allow yourself to be vulnerable. I think you really have to let your guard down and take a look at yourself.” She is referring to a kind of critical self-interrogation that surfaces, examines, and exorcises the biased assumptions that people develop in imperfect human cultures. Thus, teachers talk about mistakes they made before SEED. One teacher tells of giving students an assignment to find out how their parents met and fell in love, but then realizing that some of her students came from recently immigrated families in which marriages were arranged she exclaimed, “I can’t give my students an assignment to ask their parents that!”

Several white, middle-class teachers make clear that, once they recognized the extent of their own complicity, they felt empowered to challenge derogatory remarks from colleagues, friends, and family members. SEED experiences empower participants to recognize and resist the systemic hold of injustice and exclusion. As one SEED educator states,

I guess before, something that I had never really thought about at all until SEED was the concept of white privilege, and I think that happens to a lot of people. That, and I’ve always thought that racism is wrong, sexism is wrong, and heterosexism is wrong, but I’ve never thought about all the ways my life is immeasurable easier just because I happen to be white.

Another white teacher looks back in dismay to a time when she claimed not to see color. She now feels empowered to put “white guilt” aside and deal with differences more constructively. “By participating in SEED, I have heightened my awareness of the diversity that will walk through my classroom door. I’m looking for differences, not ignoring them but looking for them, and looking for opportunities to celebrate our differences.” Educators of color also claim to find SEED communities empowering. As one black female educator says, SEED “opens a door.” She talks about the fact that she felt more comfortable naming injustices in SEED groups, knowing that she would not simply be dismissed as “an angry black woman.”

I can say things in my way now and I’m not dismissed. There isn’t that shock. Folks are maybe thinking about what was said, there’s more dialogue about it, not just silence and moving on to something else.

An educator originally from South Asia concurs with this sentiment. She explains that without SEED

...I’m just a person of color with an accent from a third-world country. Who cares about that? Who puts any value to that, you know? There’s always a feeling that unless you conform, you’re not okay.

Participation in SEED drove home for her how much her voice and actions do matter, and she redoubled her efforts at transforming curricula for young readers and writers. For instance, she opened up curricula to more parent involvement and cultural exchange:

In India we celebrate the Festival of Light, and all the holidays celebrated by different cultures seem to be celebrations of light. So I came up with this idea of inviting parents—of course not everyone could come, but whoever could—to bring artifacts from their homes and share the culture and explain to the children how they celebrated holidays in their own country.

She explains that when these students had their own cultures spotlighted in this way, they did not feel “weird or alien.” They could feel “normal.” What is more, her SEED involvement “validated” her efforts and empowered her to continue them.

SEED participation brings, then, continual cycles of vulnerability and empowerment. Participants like the previous educator often choose SEED circles because they feel alone and vulnerable. In SEED seminars, they find safety, acceptance, and the inspiration to take risks. They feel empowered to speak and act, which often culminates in new waves of vulnerable feelings. Sometimes all of this can occur within SEED circles themselves. One educator of color, for instance, recounts a disastrous “fish bowl” experience. Educators of color sat and talked in an inner circle while an outside circle of white educators listened. She explains that a number of white participants “didn’t get it” and tried to deny or contradict what they had heard from their colleagues

of color. It took a long time for her to come to terms with their dismissal, and she found herself retreating from open dialogue for a time. A gay teacher reports that he lived with constant fear of lawsuits and backlash—even from colleagues—as he worked with a student gay-straight alliance group in his high school. Indeed, the Eagle Forum, a conservative political group, tried to rally public protest against district acceptance of such groups (Preskar, 2004). Another teacher relates that one effect of SEED work is opening up conversational topics among students “that can turn families upside down,” and she worries that “once we start all of this, is there somebody there to pick up the pieces?” One white male talks about SEED groups as “being hard on a man” because the level of emotional sharing contradicts the way most men are socialized.

Perhaps most of all, however, SEED participants and their groups are vulnerable because, as one person states, there is no solid “power base” in the district supporting equity and diversity. She worries that SEED work is not sufficiently institutionalized in the district, that it does not have widespread backing by those with political power and, therefore, might be subject to the whims of pressure groups from outside, like the Eagle Forum, or changes in district/school leadership, or shifting priorities and scarce resources. There is growing recognition that SEED work must become increasingly public and political. Empowered by their work in SEED, participants are beginning to tackle these problems, although they know that public and political work brings with it more vulnerability. The dialectic continues.

## *Revelation and Recognition*

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Philosopher Charles Taylor (1994) lays out in powerful language what happens when individuals and groups are not “recognized” as having value in their own right. He says, “partly through the pressures toward outward conformity, but also because in taking an instrumental stance toward myself, I may have lost the capacity to listen to this inner voice.” He then adds, “There is a certain way of being human that is *my* way. I am called upon to live my life in this way, and not in imitation of anyone else’s life. . . . This notion gives a new importance to being true to myself. If I am not, I miss the point of my life; I miss what being human is for *me*” (p. 30). For Taylor, the process of being recognized is an act that affirms one’s status as a unique, individual human being. Moreover, to take the time to truly see and recognize another’s humanity is a necessary step to creating an ethic of care in classrooms and schools (Noddings, 1992).

The language of Taylor and Noddings is congruent with the language SEED participants use. In successful SEED groups, they claim to feel sufficiently visible, affirmed, and appreciated to speak their minds openly. In short, they say they are *recognized*, in Taylor’s sense of the word, by group members. Moreover, news has spread in the district that SEED groups create spaces of respectful attention to all members, which has become a powerful incentive for others to join. In fact,

SEED groups have multiplied throughout the district as more leaders have come forward to be trained and more educators seek to join seminars. Because of the recognition they receive among others in their groups, members say that they are able to relax into authentic conversations and speak candidly about their own experiences with exclusion and injustice. According to SEED leaders, the resultant synergy of voices and experiences forges a collective commitment to explore ways that students might have similar experiences in their classrooms and schools in the Elk Grove District.

The honest dialogue that recognition opens can be very disconcerting. Over time, empowering others by recognizing their right to speak and be heard invites the airing of a variety of opinions and perspectives. Inevitably in pluralistic communities, people encounter views that are quite different from and even inconsistent with their own. As a result, the genuine effort to respect others’ perspectives sometimes results in surprises, disclosures, realizations, and even epiphanies that affect others in the community. Participants say that because they recognize and attend to others they sometimes encounter disrupting new ideas—or *revelations*—that nudge them to rethink former views and practices. One white educator describes the shock of seeing taken-for-granted, mainstream notions from the perspectives of those outside the mainstream:



**“I’ve dealt with a lot of teachers now at two schools that I think either stay with SEED, came back to SEED, or in many ways ran away from SEED because of what they saw.”**

...what struck me really in the core was that whole idea that I have of America as this melting pot, and that there is this kind of white majority, and what I was taught is that people are accepted—all people are accepted—but your ultimate goal is to come from this place of color to this place of white. And what I never really heard and saw was, “Gosh, wouldn’t it be nice if the white kind of went to the dark.” And that really struck me.

Over time, most SEED participants come to realize that everyone’s individual perspective is necessarily limited and that critical dialogue can correct areas of ignorance and blindness. The process isn’t easy, however. As one SEED participant puts it:

We talked about people looking at themselves, and I think sometimes it’s painful, maybe because they’re surprised and shocked, but you really have that, might be an “ism,” in you and you really never looked at it before. So it seems like it could really be hard to go deeper, and sometimes you’re not willing because it scares you. Something I wrote down was the barrier, the fear of the unknown. Some people don’t know what they’re going to discover, fear itself I guess.

Paradoxically, then, recognition of others *can* mean a temporary sense of not recognizing oneself or fearing what one might see in oneself. On occasion, according to SEED participants, this discomfort can cause some participants to leave groups or subtly disengage. Others, though, appreciate the opportunity for self-improvement. One SEED participant sums it up well:

I think some people recognize who they are, and they don’t like what’s in the mirror. We have our own perceptions of ourselves, and then people have perceptions of us. I’ve dealt with a lot of teachers now at two schools that I think either stay with SEED, came back to SEED, or in many ways ran away from SEED because of what they saw.

For those who refuse to run away but, rather, face new revelations about themselves, the benefits can be profound. The SEED experience can shake educators from a sense of complacency that only “other people” harm students or colleagues through biases and

assumptions. One participant describes what it meant to her to look squarely into her own prejudices:

...for me, personally, the thing that I find myself trying not to tolerate in myself anymore, SEED has really helped me to realize my own prejudices against people who are conservative religiously or politically...Before SEED, I had so many negative experiences with people who use religion or politics to say hateful things about people really important to me or to criticize the groups who aren’t trying hard enough.

Several participants state that their experiences of genuinely recognizing and attending to the perspectives of colleagues different from themselves has helped them understand how important recognition is for their students as learners. This recognition, according to one white participant, sometimes requires remarkable vigilance, “I evaluate my own beliefs each day before I go in there and address students. I understand how my bias powers everything that comes out of my mouth.” Another teacher reports that, before SEED, she thought her status as a woman of color made her immune from perpetuating injustice:

When I went into SEED, I thought of myself as a very open-minded person. Here I am a woman, a minority. I’m very open-minded [parodying herself]. I know what you’re talking about, especially when they were bashing all these white men. By going through the SEED process, I realized I was just as racist, homophobic, and classist as everybody else.

A white teacher who had been complacent in the belief that the world was basically just had to recognize that not everyone shared her experiences:

Some of the days we had meetings, it was shocking that people actually felt the way they said they were feeling. Not our SEED members, but some of the movies we saw, the video clips. That there are people in our society right now that truly feel these other people are less than people...Forcing myself to watch those video clips was horrifying.

Teachers also discuss their work in classrooms, like one white woman who claims that SEED made her aware that she used exclusive language in her classroom:

I catch and correct myself, and I'll do it in front of my class...when I say things like "low man on the totem pole" or "no way, Jose." I tell my students, "Excuse me, I didn't mean to say this. This is why I didn't want to say this."

Another teacher relates what it was like to engage in deep reflection and come to recognize herself in new ways. She muses in particular about her relationships with students:

My first year in SEED was all about just discovering myself and trying to figure out where I stood. But the second year, that's when it started to be more internalized....I thought, "Now that I've got the subconscious and conscious part of my brain [in order], what do I do with that now that I know there are children sitting out there that are experiencing what I've experienced?"

An innovative white kindergarten teacher, perhaps wondering the same thing, created a special unit on color to help her students appreciate the differences among them. The curriculum became a veritable celebration of a multi-hued humanity as the teacher invited children to examine different objects and foods from their everyday worlds. They named colors and noticed gradations and subtle tones, and the teacher eventually helped them make a similar celebratory connection to human skin colors.

In the spirit of Emily Style's (1998) idea that curricula should provide a "mirror" as well as a "window," a middle school teacher decided to imbue her students with the idea that "people like them" could be authors:

When I first came back [from a national SEED New Leaders Week], I really started looking at the kind of materials I had for students to read. I was getting to know the students as readers, what their levels were and what their interests were. I started to realize that I needed to find some authors that kids really connected with—Latina, African American, Vietnamese, and so forth. Then I started taking kids to meet the authors. For instance, I took the kids downtown to meet an African American author. I found out that a professor at Santa Clara who had worked in farm labor camps and was an author was going to be nearby. I

took fifteen kids to see him, and they asked the most impressive questions. We started discovering all these books, and kids wrote letters to authors about how meaningful their writing was to them...

She went on to tell a story about a boy who experienced a renewed interest in academics as a result of her attempts to find books by diverse authors.

And then one time I was teaching intersession. I had this boy, and I couldn't help him. Then one day, he picked up *Malcolm X*, and he couldn't keep his eyes from that book. And he said, "I really like this book. Do you have any books like this, just like this, but about Hmong people?" And I realized I don't know any that are written by Hmong for this age group. I wanted some short stories and poems, and then I remembered this book. I looked for it in my office and at home. I found it and brought it to him.... And he was supposed to be doing this reflection as an assignment, and he did this through *Malcolm X*...I'd been doing this book project and I was able to see I could connect with this kid. And having some diverse books helped something spring in him.

In Taylor's (1994) terms, this teacher *recognized* her student and responded to him as a unique and valued human being.

Again and again, SEED teachers report taking the time and energy to find out what matters to students, what they care about, how to make them feel respected, and how to keep their integrity intact throughout the learning process and within the learning community. Teachers, like the kindergarten teacher previously, try to provide students with perspectives and tools to negotiate a diverse human population because seeing and being seen humanizes the learning environment. What is more, taking the time to recognize others can bring new revelations about the human condition which, in turn, strengthen the capacity for recognition.

According to Noddings (1992) and Watson (2003), students who are cared for and recognized by the adults around them are more likely to return the favor to others. Thus, SEED participants try to make students' unique individuality visible not only to themselves as educators but also to other students. In

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the process, they attempt to model a reciprocal, moral, and inclusive approach to community. Most simply refuse to allow others to objectify or stereotype students.

Perhaps this protectiveness is due, in part, to the fact that SEED educators report feeling victimized and objectified by the current accountability movement. They express concern that they are reduced to technocrats expected to pour bits of data into children's heads. Nevertheless, SEED teachers explain that they resist conflating school success with standardized test scores. Certainly, they want every student to achieve academic success, and most do not mind helping students learn how to do well on tests. But they know that real learning transcends test scores, and that students tend to succeed in the context of constructive human relationships. One teacher expresses her frustration that county standards actually infringe on her ability to focus on her students as whole people:

...all they want is data, assessment data. They want to see your kids as, you know, do they fit into these square molds? Are they accelerated? Are they below benchmark?...I don't see my kids that way.

Significantly, given the prevailing view that learning is all about achievement on standardized tests, and the quality of teaching can be measured by test scores, SEED educators in their interviews claim to be concentrating even more decidedly on values like justice, care, and equity. In fact, many say that the heavy emphasis on test scores causes them to redouble their efforts to get to know students well so that they can find the keys to open them to learning and meet their needs and those of their families.

In these ways, SEED opens safe spaces for participants to feel recognized so that their own cultural stories are confirmed, affirmed, and shared.

Their reflections and conversations lead them to understand, and then actively resist, the seductive pull to just "take care of business" and thoughtlessly disregard the humanity of their colleagues and students. In their effort to recognize the individuals around them, many educators experience discomforting revelations about themselves, their classrooms, their schools, and the larger society. These revelations bring them to new levels of awareness and service and, ironically, increase their capacity to recognize those different from themselves.

The SEED educators in this study describe how they work passionately to come to know others better and, in doing so, come to know themselves better. They work to create classrooms in which students see the value of being recognized, recognizing others, revealing what is of value to others, and experiencing revelations that broaden their view of reality. SEED work is often a process of discovery: of human differences and of self. As one teacher avers,

I did SEED last year. It was my first time, and I was going to the meetings and listening to everything. I wasn't really—I started realizing things, that I was like kind of blind to things around me. I never even knew it. I was like in my own little group, my own little world.

Another teacher states succinctly, "I always think of SEED as a path into myself." Such a path is smoothed when the surrounding community recognizes the integrity of the journey, yet it can become rocky and steep with each new revelation from the group. SEED participants persist in hopes of becoming more wise, more sensitive, and more capable of being just. They believe that their own growth and learning as professionals and that of their students absolutely depends on this work.

## Agency and Reciprocity

Agency and reciprocity represent the fourth pair of co-existing forces reflected in the SEED experience. According to participants, individuals develop a strong sense that they can take action to make a difference for students and others, and they do. But they also sometimes feel overwhelmed by the struggles inherent in addressing inequities and challenging the status quo, both within and outside of their SEED groups. They come to realize that their agency as individuals is linked to their membership in a community of shared purpose.

SEED seminars provide a “third space”—a communal space—between individuals and their larger world, in which dialogue fosters the creation of shared meaning and purpose, and out of which grows a sense of individual and collective agency. Here one’s definition of self is shaped in relation to that of others, and vice versa, through critical reflection and dialogue. Bakhtin’s (1981) dialogic constructs are helpful in thinking about the experience described by SEED participants. He views dialogue as a dialectical relationship between the “self” and “other” wherein the self requires the other for existence. Multiple voices engaging in dialogue avoid narrowly defined consensus and celebrate diversity. “Appropriation” is an integral component of dialogue: in order to engage in dialogue, one must be able to apprehend, internalize, and recreate ideas expressed through language by others, which are then reinterpreted and used to expand the sense of the self.

It is this third space, and the iterative process of dialogue and the creation of meaning, that allows individuals to develop their sense of agency and an orientation toward action. Paradoxically, this individual agency is carried out in service to others so, in fact, that individual efficacy is motivated by and oriented toward a concern for the community. The more one acts in the name of the common good—even as an individual—the more one becomes connected to a community. In return, the community continues to inspire and motivate.

We heard a resounding message from SEED participants that they can no longer be passive in the face of injustice. This mantra is representative of a powerful feeling of agency and a simultaneous commitment to community. It represents a shared

commitment to counter attitudes and actions that cause harm to others’ humanity and impede students’ sense of safety, efficacy, and ability to learn.

Teachers speak of their endeavors to create more inclusive environments and learning experiences for students and of efforts to reach out to parents as partners in supporting children’s success. As one participant explains,

Before SEED, I never really took a stand when I was confronted with my own biases or the biases of people around me, my students, families, or colleagues. I pretty much tended to let anything I felt, or anything students said, just kind of roll off me. I would hear it, but I would just teach. I might say “no,” or “don’t do that,” but most of the time I just kept going. And then I started SEED three years ago and realized that it is my responsibility to confront my own biases as well as the biases of people around me. So I am no longer sitting back and letting the kids say what they say, even in jest. Or even with my own family...I confront it constantly.

Recognizing some students’ lack of agency (or, paradoxically, exercising their agency to fail) has inspired some to action on behalf of students by naming the problem.

If you want to fail quietly...kids will teach you how to do that. They will teach you where to sit, when to speak, and when not to speak...It’s that resistance to learning that conforms with appropriate classroom behavior that really does result in kids failing. What you learn to articulate in SEED is “this is the perception that kids have in this classroom—I challenge you to challenge the kid. Your challenge is to create an environment that kids indeed want to participate.”

Individuals take action in a variety of ways beyond their classrooms as well, by creating student and community SEED groups and programs such as the writing program at a district elementary school. Sometimes, others view SEED participants’ acts of agency as too assertive, as was experienced by one teacher who was asked not to post “inspirational” messages in the restroom. In schools where there is a

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strong SEED presence, the institutional culture has become more inclusive. Adults expect each other to take action against discrimination. As one person notes,

It's [SEED] shaken up the school culture in terms of what's tolerated and what's not tolerated. You're expected to correct the kids when they use the N word and the FA word; it's not acceptable anymore. You're expected to step up when kids demean kids...It's raised the bar on professional conduct.

The collective power of teachers' efficacy seems to reach a "tipping point" (Gladwell, 2000) and fuels a cultural shift. As individuals develop and act on their moral commitment to making a difference for students, others are "infected," and the expectations for professional behavior change. Taking action against injustice becomes a community norm, not only in SEED groups but also in the school at large.

A group of dedicated teachers can create momentum, but having a supportive principal can make a great difference in establishing a climate of equity in which teachers'—and students'—agency is valued. Principals speak of their efforts to foster attitudes of respect and openness to various perspectives, provide support for teachers' participation in SEED, and build the level of trust necessary for staff to discuss hard topics. The presence of SEED in a school provides support for principals to take a stand on behalf of children as well. Thus, a dynamic interaction between the development of individual and collective agency in SEED groups and the development of a school culture in which action is expected and supported can grow and deepen over time. The dialectic continues, with individual teachers and administrators feeling a sense of agency both as single actors and as members of a collective movement. When things get tough, there is the power and reciprocal nature of the collective that keeps the momentum going.

Bringing in windows and mirrors can be a physical act, but what brings the depth behind it is the fact that you share these ideas with your colleagues. The dialogue and connections between teachers is so important because that's what takes it outside of the classroom and that's what permeates the entire environment.

One aspect of SEED that contributes to an individual's ability to act is the experience, knowledge, and skills gained through participation. Participants speak of the literature they read as contributing invaluable to their own thinking and lending credibility to their work with others. Strategies for engaging others in dialogue and diplomacy skills learned in SEED seminars over time are essential to sustaining and moving forward difficult exchanges about hard topics.

I think what SEED does for a person of color [is] it brings all that to consciousness [understanding from where ignorance emerges]. You are dealing with it every day, all your life, but understanding what it is you need to do and how to facilitate that process...I know that I'm making progress and I've got tools in terms of how I can bring about that knowledge, that insight for people...understanding that you can't make people change, just provide them with the experiences so that they reflect and maybe change for themselves.

Participants describe struggles that dishearten them, from difficult exchanges with students, colleagues, parents, friends, and family members to high profile conflicts such as the Eagle Forum's opposition to the Day of Silence (Preskar, 2004). In this highly publicized conflict, a national conservative group opposed the participation of Elk Grove high school students in activities designed to call attention to the challenges faced by gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender students and show support for them as members of a caring community—in essence, trying to silence their act of silence. The Elk Grove School District administration tried to appease the group and, in doing so, many SEED participants felt that they had disenfranchised students further.

It's really discouraging because you're doing all this work, trying to empower the kids, telling them they have voice. Then the district proves them exactly right—that they are silent, that they have no voice. When it comes right down to it, they don't really count.

Despite obstacles, SEED participants persist and are in some ways even more determined to keep going. People say over and over that they will not be stopped in their efforts to right wrongs and do what they can to make schools more inclusive, safer places for students to learn and grow.

A high school teacher describes another incident in which an Afghani man had agreed to speak to students, following 9/11, about what life was like in Afghanistan. The teacher had followed the district procedures for approving presenters, but the morning that the guest speaker came to school to meet with students the principal informed him that he needed to go through a criminal background check before he could come on campus. He graciously agreed to do that, and his presentation was rescheduled.

He came and did an incredible presentation that I don't think any of our kids will ever forget. But I'm still really upset about the experience, and I think it speaks to what SEED is really about. It's about being an ally for people, standing up and saying "that is not right." Not caving in to hysteria in those types of situations, letting voices be heard that may not be the voices you agree with but a voice that has as much right to speak as your own.

Several SEED leaders and participants speak of their frustration with the slow pace of change in light of the enormity of work needed to make schools truly equitable learning environments for children and adults. They cite the frustrations of dealing with colleagues who refer to students with IEPs (individual education plans) or from low-income homes as "those kids," administrators who cannot articulately defend curricula against complaints of parents who want schools to present a narrow perspective, and pressure for higher test scores to the exclusion of seeing and

hearing students as individuals. SEED facilitators can become frustrated as well by the contrast between their experiences in the national SEED New Leaders Week and the slower pace and "lighter" substance of dialogues within their own seminars during the school year. But they also recognize that the deep work that SEED engenders cannot be mandated. As one SEED leader says,

Sometimes the work is so hard and we think it really needs to move faster and it needs to be everybody, and everybody needs to see it's important. But that's not real... We'll take people when they're ready, and that might have happened to somebody four years ago and that might happen to somebody in the future, and so you need to continue to have the vehicle for people to have these dialogues.

Many participants mention the fear of losing their jobs if they go too far in pushing for equity and diversity, and several acknowledge that they cannot continue to work to improve the educational experiences and opportunities for students if they are fired. But their resolve to continue to act as individuals grows out of a deeply rooted sense of moral courage that finds strength in the collective voice and commitment of the SEED community. As one SEED leader proclaims,

The SEED process itself is something I would not allow to be stopped. I would fight to make sure that no one stops this process.... Since I've been trained as a facilitator, I almost feel like it's my job, bringing it with me wherever I go.... The reason I so comfortably can say that I'd fight for SEED is because I would be just one person in a large group of people. There are so many leaders in the work we do with SEED. It is a special kind of work.

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### *Ambiguity and Certainty*

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SEED requires participants to examine their own perspectives and open themselves to others' and, in doing so, to dwell in ambiguity. At the same time, they become galvanized with the certainty of shared purpose to fight against injustices that keep students from growing toward their potential as learners, human beings, and members of a community. SEED dialogues elicit a philosophical search of practices, principles, ideologies, values, commitments, and roles. They raise questions about perspective: If all perspectives matter, does any one perspective count more than others? They raise questions about the purposes of public education and practices as they relate to those purposes: Whose views do curricula represent? Are there teaching practices that advantage some students while disadvantaging others or that perpetuate existing inequities? How can our schools provide equitable learning opportunities for all students? What are the commitments of teachers, students, families, schools, and communities in educating all students well? What is the role of teachers in creating and sustaining learning environments that nurture all students' development as members of a democratic community?

The transformations that individuals experience in SEED involve a tacking between examining one's own perspectives and reflecting on those of others in such a way that one's own are called into question, perhaps for the first time. For white, middle-class participants, this shift is most dramatic. Time and time again, we heard testimony to the cathartic experience of recognizing the unearned power of white privilege, moving from a sense of certainty about "how things are" in the world to a state of disequilibrium that necessitates grappling with ambiguity and defining a course of action against injustice.

I really took a look at some of the issues that I've never taken a look at before. My own privilege of being a white person in this society, the advantages, the things that I have in my life due to the fact that I'm white, I'm heterosexual....What was hard for me was that this was nothing I chose for myself. It was something by birthright, by merely being born into the family I [was]. I'm coming from a position of the majority, and I had never really looked at the impact it's had on me, some of it

very subtle....That's the piece that blew my mind....What am I doing to be fighting for justice in all of these areas for other people?

Even among those who consider themselves enlightened about matters of difference, there are new levels of revelation that, as one SEED seminar leader who had seen herself as "multicultural-plus teacher" explains, "kicked [them] between the eyes."

There was this African American woman and when she started talking about her 21-year-old son and how every single time he leaves the house she's scared for his safety....How much I take for granted raising white sons that I don't have those same fears. Every single time they leave the house? That was so hard for me.... You get back into the classroom and you have these students that come from all different backgrounds, and you have to say, "Oh yeah, now I know a little better how hard it is for them every day."

Not just white participants, but others become aware of their own racism and other biases. For example, a Latina who previously had only friends of Mexican ancestry now has friends of varying ethnicities, and gay friends as well.

SEED participants value the space that SEED provides for engaging in discourse about differences and supporting the recognition of varying perspectives necessary for meaningful change to take place. "SEED put difficult discussions on diversity into the professional setting and said it was okay to do it," states one person. While the de-centering that participants experience in this process is uncomfortable, they learn the benefits of suspending one's own perspective in order to learn about another's experience and point of view and, consequently, be able to honor it. Although race and gender issues take central stage in most SEED groups, seminars open up dialogue about perspectives more broadly as well. Can a right-to-life advocate consider the perspective of a person who supports women's right-to-choose? Can a conservative Christian whose church views homosexuality as a sin honor the perspective of a gay or lesbian colleague or student?

It's not about if she's right or wrong, but look at the perspective. What if this is the experience of the person? SEED says you can't

just slam the door on that thought. If you do then why are you in the program? It forces you to take a second look and maybe at some point pull your emotions in a bit more away from it than when you first heard it.

Through this experience of holding community while honoring difference, SEED participants become resolute advocates for understanding and respecting the perspectives of students and families. Over and over, people relate that as a result of their SEED experience they can “no longer be silent when [they] observe injustice.” One person describes the process this way:

SEED forces people to talk about their perceptions. And if you can get people to start dialoguing about, “This is my perception of the educational community,” within the context of that dialogue also holds, if facilitated correctly, their misconceptions and what their new and different perceptions are and appreciations are. Then you develop what I think is key in communication, reciprocity, where there is a sort of dynamic exchange, a give-and-take, and people start behaving differently.

A few participants mention, however, that they are guarded in disclosing their experiences and perspectives in their SEED groups. It took one participant several months to summon the courage to bring up an incident in which a colleague made a racist remark in a meeting and no one responded. Another recounts discussions in her SEED group in which others of her own ethnicity denied that their experience was what she knew it to be, out of fear of others thinking less of them. One person whom she knew to be a fluent Spanish speaker denied knowing the language. These incidents are not the norm, however, and appear to be related to some group leaders’ inability to foster a sense of safety and facilitate open dialogue within their groups.

SEED dialogues invite examination of the purpose of public education in a diverse democracy. Many participants speak of the tension between accountability demands and providing personalized, “balanced” educational experiences for students in an environment that celebrates diversity. “Seeking equity” is the espoused goal of national and state standards and accountability systems; at the same time, however, the focus on testing pulls energy and attention away from addressing equity and diversity in meaningful ways. Test scores give the illusion of certainty about student learning yet, taken alone, tell little of what is

happening in regard to the learning of individual students and groups. Many SEED participants talk about this tension between being accountable to external standards for students’ academic performance while remaining accountable to children, families, and their communities for respecting students’ differing life contexts and supporting their development of knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that are critical to participating fully as members of democratic communities—but which are difficult to measure.

The state priorities drive us toward test scores and academic performance, which is important. I really do believe that there has to be a standard. We can’t just go into the classroom, do what we do, and not be accountable for that. But there is so much that the children bring into the classroom, and there is no accountability for that...their baggage; their issues; their life experiences, good or bad...Schools develop an individual that will be a participant in the community some day. It’s not just the development of academics; [we] shouldn’t just be focused on academic selves because that’s not what’s going to build our community in the future.

SEED participants struggle with the challenges inherent in negotiating a balance between ensuring high quality education with some level of “certainty” without surrendering a tolerance for the ambiguity that fuels a continual search to answer diverse needs. The personal and civic aspects of learning are not only related to curricula but also to the attitudes of adults, school and classroom culture, and policies and practices. If students are to become participants of diverse democratic communities, note several SEED participants, they must learn to engage in civil discourse, a skill and a habit of mind that requires the ability to be comfortable enough with ambiguity to consider and learn from others’ perspectives while also being able to articulate one’s own views. Although some parents applaud teachers’ efforts to facilitate these dialogues, others are fearful or angry about their children’s academic exposure to perspectives with which they disagree. As a high school teacher explains,

I feel pretty comfortable about just trying to teach students how to have a conversation, and how to have a discussion about a topic that is controversial and actually listen to what the other person has to say. So that’s our focus, but seeing how upset some members of the

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**“My participation in SEED reminds me that I’m going to have parents coming from all walks of life and if I want to relate to each of them I have to take those lenses off and see who they are...”**

community are about this whole issue, that gives you pause and makes you think really carefully about what it is you’re doing.

SEED dialogues encourage participants to constantly challenge their unexamined assumptions about what “school” is; the valued learning they should include in curricula; and their own expectations about students’ presumed characteristics, attitudes, and abilities. A Euro-centric view of what is worth knowing is at the heart of the canon of traditional curricula. A middle school teacher talks about a student—the only African American student in his English class, which was reading “Huck Finn”—who felt singled out each time the word “nigger” came up in the text and his peers turned to look at him, even though they were doing so out of concern for his comfort. When she took this issue to her departmental peers, they didn’t understand why this was a problem because the book is “a classic.”

Assumptions about who can learn are also deeply embedded in the organization of schools and curricula. Commonly, high school (and sometimes younger) students are tracked according to presumed ability, which very often reflects students’ ethnic backgrounds and socioeconomic status.

Participants relate many stories about how their experiences in SEED seminars cause them to reflect on their own attitudes and practices and lead to them trying to create parallel conditions in their own classrooms. One teacher describes recognizing that when she heard that a new student would be entering her class, she had made negative assumptions about the student’s abilities because the girl had a Hispanic surname.

Perspectives on and relationships with families also change for many SEED participants. Some describe recognizing that their expectations of parents have been shaped by dominant white, middle-class values and that they need to understand and relate to them from a more inclusive stance.

My participation in SEED reminds me that I’m going to have parents coming from all walks of life and if I want to relate to each of them I have to take those lenses off and see who they are...not make snap judgments about them or decisions about them and their choices in life. But recognize that they are the parents of the children I’m trying to reach and that is our ultimate goal....SEED reminds me

that our ultimate goal is helping that child, and if that parent is going to help me do that I need to welcome that parent into my room and welcome them to academia.

In some cases, participants institute school-wide changes to increase responsiveness to families. In one elementary school, the school lunch coordinator, who knows generations of local families, was a SEED co-facilitator with a classroom teacher, and the front-office staff all participated in SEED groups. Another school with a large Spanish-speaking population offered an after-school Spanish course for the largely white, monolingual staff, which resulted in more communication with families.

Feedback from students and parents also leads to a re-examination of policies and practices in regard to equity and diversity. A mother complained to her son’s high school teacher about an out-of-class assignment that she felt was inequitable because it required students to buy supplies to complete it. The teacher explains:

What we were expecting of students required them to go out and purchase two items, and consequently her son received a failing grade. He did the project, but it wasn’t done to the standards. So when we took this to the department, unbelievably everyone in the department wasn’t able to see this. So there was a lot of discussion about, “Well, why should we do this [modify the assignment]?” It was...so clear why we needed to do this. I think finally, after much discussion, that assignment has changed....We’re always trying to bring it [SEED discussions] back to school and seeing how it is affecting what we are doing at school.

Many participants mention Emily Style’s “windows and mirrors” metaphor as being helpful to their own consideration of classroom practice and curricula. Teachers describe ways that they have tried to create more inclusive environments, from hanging posters and photographs with people and objects from many cultures and traditions to their selection of reading materials and the ways they design lessons and group activities. In their efforts to be more inclusive, teachers want to convey to students a sense of certainty that they are valued and can achieve whatever their hearts and minds desire.

Some educators describe ways in which they have adapted or created more inclusive curricula. For example, a middle school teacher describes a project

that engages students in studying “A Scientist Like Me,” and teachers of young children speak of activities that engage children in discussing their observations of differing skin colors. We also heard, however, that this translation of inclusive principles into lesson plans does not occur naturally for all teachers; thus, there is a need for more concrete examples of inclusive curricula and pedagogy. There are great potential benefits to such practices, but there is also the danger of curricula becoming codified through the press for certainty, thereby defeating the intent of being open to context and circumstance.

A few people acknowledge the challenge of “never getting there,” and letting go of the idea that there is even a “there” to reach. Dwelling in ambiguity can be exhausting, the quest for inclusiveness a continuous journey of layers of learning and relearning. One teacher describes her experience colorfully, noting that

just as you think you’ve gotten clear about something, such as making sure that your homework assignment is not making unfair demands on families, you ask students to write about something fun they are going to do over the weekend, and one kid cries because he won’t be doing anything fun. Or you catch yourself saying, “Merry Christmas” and think, why can’t I remember to say “Happy Holidays?”

As Peggy McIntosh (1980) notes in her article “Feeling Like a Fraud,” those who know that they don’t know, who feel like frauds, are not; those who are sure they are completely “enlightened” are the real frauds. These continuous challenges of striving for understanding while acknowledging that you must continually work at it without achieving it, are reflected in the work of SEED itself, according to one facilitator.

I see that here we’re doing the diversity work and multicultural dialogue and then there are lots of issues amongst the leadership locally and on the national level. I was surprised how rooted systemic biases are, whether you’re talking race, gender, or sexism and class. I’m amazed at how ingrained it can be... We’re talking about diversity and the same dynamics that play out in men and women in terms of power; they go on in terms of SEED, and the people in charge of the program and those who are doing the training. SEED helps you get to the point of hearing what other people won’t speak in the language and get heartfelt that you

are really are working toward balancing the power, but when it comes down to the way things are set up inside they still play out.

Despite these ever-present challenges, the galvanizing of SEED participants’ commitment to seeking equity and embracing diversity holds great hope for transforming school cultures and the educational experiences of students and their families, as well as the experiences of the diverse communities of educators who work with them. There is a certain awareness that SEED participants carry with them, a stance toward seeing and hearing others, that is both a simple and profoundly radical shift from business as usual. A school principal describes how his participation in SEED changed his approach to his role:

I think respect for diversity and making schools and workplaces respectful of all people in terms of backgrounds and the SEED culture. It just gets translated all of the time in hiring decisions, in how to resolve problems—either if there is a communication problem that comes up between students, or between students and staff, or staff members. I think it’s the whole SEED emphasis in learning to look at their world. Learning to recognize that we all see the world out of our particular point of view makes for a lot more effective communication. Just instead of judging that person as being wrong—the emphasis of SEED is to stop and take a look at what the world looks like through those eyes—and [this] makes a very big difference... I see it translated in things like a student disciplinary problem. A student walks in who looks like at the world like a gang-banger—that many people would dismiss as sort of just a troublemaker. What comes up just taking the time to listen, and to step inside that person’s point of view, and then share the point of view that the school has. That’s a dialogue, not a top down.

SEED invokes an awareness of the need for continuous attention to assumptions about the way things are and should be. When one is open to ambiguity, one can also, paradoxically, become more certain—and committed—to values of inclusiveness. It is this shift, rather than any definitive set of standards or program in civic education, that has the potential to truly make schools places where all students learn and feel valued as members of a democratic community.

**“Just as you think you’ve gotten clear about something, such as making sure that your homework assignment is not making unfair demands on families, you ask students to write about something fun they are going to do over the weekend, and one kid cries because he won’t be doing anything fun.”**

## NEXT STEPS: FACING REALITIES AND FINDING POSSIBILITIES

The data from our study attest strongly to the many benefits the SEED project has brought to Elk Grove School District. SEED work is especially appropriate given the wide—and ever-increasing—diversity in the district. Participants commit themselves to providing all students and their families with a sense of belonging in their classrooms and schools and offer specific examples of and strategies for accomplishing their goals. Empowering themselves to work for justice, care, and equity, they strive to empower students as learners and families as student advocates. They demand recognition of all students, despite their differences, and design ways to make classroom practices, relationships, and curricula

inclusive and respectful so that students can find relevance and meaning while they are learning. They attempt to not only speak about but also act on their commitments to make their classrooms just, caring, and equitable places where all students can develop, in turn, their own commitments and the ability to act on them. They want to create classroom and school communities in which every student has an opportunity to learn yet deliberately remain open to engaging new ideas, perspectives, and challenges. In order for SEED work to continue to flourish in Elk Grove, however, educators need to address certain continuing challenges and dilemmas and envision, support, and pursue possibilities.

**For SEED work to grow, leaders and participants should continue to seek innovative ways to share with and learn from each other, fostering synergy between SEED and other initiatives. As one interviewee notes, “you can SEED but if you don’t continue to fertilize, water, watch, and nourish, it will just be like any other act or new training [that is soon a memory].”**



### 1. SUSTAINABILITY

The sustainability of SEED in Elk Grove will require a long-term strategy that includes:

- a. locating ways to inform and actively involve district leadership;
- b. building alliances with community-based groups; and
- c. committing resources to support coordination and continued preparation of new leaders.

#### *Rationale:*

Many participants speak of their faith that SEED will grow as a grassroots movement and eventually change the way schools educate students in Elk Grove. Although there is wide-spread commitment to SEED among school-based educators and some administrators, however, it is not fully embraced by district administration. Dr. Odie Douglas, who was assistant superintendent and SEED’s shepherd in the central office, was reassigned to a high school principal position. This change made visible the previously seamless support and coordination of the project from an oversight perspective. In the absence of a district-wide administrator in charge of supporting and expanding the work of SEED, special efforts are now needed to incorporate SEED into the life-blood of the district. Likewise, steps to actively involve district leadership and build alliances with community-based groups that will help to sustain the fullest possibilities of SEED in schools are necessary.

Because SEED work can be quite nuanced and subtle, school leadership must actually *experience* it rather than just learn about it. Efforts to ensure

participation are likely to heighten support for SEED work. Similarly, increasing involvement with community and other groups would also strengthen SEED efforts to address issues of equity and diversity in both schools and the community and would lend strategic support for SEED work in schools when issues arise, such as the Eagle Forum incident.

As external (grant) funding for the SEED project decreases, it becomes increasingly important for the district to affirm its support for creating a climate for equity and diversity by targeting resources for this work. It must commit financial and human resources to sustaining the coordination of SEED as a network. Likewise, the investment made in training nearly a hundred SEED leaders is significant. For SEED work to grow, leaders and participants should continue to seek innovative ways to share with and learn from each other, fostering synergy between SEED and other initiatives. As one interviewee notes, “you can SEED but if you don’t continue to fertilize, water, watch, and nourish, it will just be like any other act or new training [that is soon a memory].”



## 2. FACILITATION

As groups evolve, so too must facilitators' abilities to support their members' growth. SEED facilitators need opportunities to deepen their knowledge of group dynamics and their facilitation skills over time. Elk Grove SEED leaders should consider ways to provide this support in a responsive fashion through:

- a. gathering more frequent feedback from members about group interactions and processes;
- b. creating additional opportunities for SEED facilitators to enhance and deepen their knowledge and skills related to group dynamics in learning communities, especially around sensitive issues of power, marginality, and community development in cross-cultural settings;
- c. exploring and drawing on "outside knowledge" to enhance SEED facilitators' knowledge and skills in ways that are congruent with SEED principles and practices.

### *Rationale:*

Some SEED participants talk about "uneven facilitation" among SEED seminar leaders. Of course, this issue is to be expected given the scale of the project. Nevertheless, it is a serious concern because three interviewees claim to have left their SEED groups because of what they regard as poor facilitation. Because we did not interview many people outside of SEED groups, we do not know how extensive the problem is, yet there are enough references in our data from people who "heard" about weak facilitation that we consider it a legitimate concern. In the spirit of SEED openness, participants should expose, air, and address challenges with facilitation on a regular basis.

Even skilled facilitators would benefit from opportunities to learn more about group dynamics and other strategies for taking their groups' dialogues to deeper levels in addressing highly sensitive topics. It is important to remember that although the SEED New Leaders Week prepares facilitators to lead a seminar for one year a majority of Elk Grove SEED facilitators have continued well beyond this timeframe. Seeing facilitation on a developmental continuum may be useful to SEED leaders as they consider next steps for personal and collective growth for both the SEED seminars and the overall project. Not all "outside knowledge" about group dynamics, facilitation, and learning communities is congruent with SEED. We strongly suggest exploring approaches that are in harmony with SEED's democratic, responsive, and inclusive principles and practices.

Gaining a clearer picture of SEED participation will be



### 3. PARTICIPATION

helpful to planning and sustainability. It is presently unclear who joins SEED, how and why they make that choice, and who leaves seminars and why. Collecting data as to the life cycle of SEED participants, with particular attention to issues of recruitment (and the demographics of recruitment); training; and support of on-going groups is vital to sustainability planning.

#### *Rationale:*

It is presently unclear who chooses to become a part of SEED or why and how they make that choice. Our data indicates that many choose participation because of a predisposition toward social justice, which raises the concern of whether SEED is working with persons already committed to SEED work, or if it is reaching new audiences who might benefit from SEED. Nevertheless, we encountered some participants who joined out of curiosity, and even a few who joined in order to challenge, yet found themselves won over by, the experience. We recommend that the district support SEED leaders in gathering data around SEED participation. Who volunteers? Why? Are there commonalities among

SEED participants? If so, what are they? What motivates participants to join SEED? Publicity? Word of mouth? What works to encourage participation? What is unwelcoming or unappealing? Who quits? Why? Are certain groups or types of participants unintentionally disadvantaged, excluded, marginalized, and so forth (men, persons with fundamentalist or orthodox belief structures, etc.)? If so, how does that happen? For instance, do some participants perceive SEED seminars as unfriendly to white males? Should facilitators pay some level of attention to issues of gender in group processes? For another example, several women of color relate feeling marginalized, unsafe, misunderstood, and even offended in their groups. How ought SEED leadership respond to such concerns?

**It is presently unclear who chooses to become a part of SEED or why and how they make that choice. Our data indicates that many choose participation because of a predisposition toward social justice, which raises the concern of whether SEED is working with persons already committed to SEED work, or if it is reaching new audiences who might benefit from SEED.**



## 4. IMPACT

The true test of SEED work will ultimately be the impact it is having on student learning and the district community. Our study data indicate that some educators naturally implement and adopt SEED practices, and others adapt their practice to re-align with core SEED insights and concepts. A third group does neither. An opportunity exists to benefit educators and students across the district and beyond through:

- a. inventorying and describing specifically if and how SEED ideas and commitments are translated into practice; and
- b. developing ways to make these classroom-based examples of curricula and instructional strategies that align with specific state standards for teaching available to educators throughout the district.

### *Rationale:*

It is a common assumption that educators naturally translate new knowledge, insights, and understandings into their practice. (Smith, 2000). Several strong examples exist in Elk Grove of ways that individual teachers have shaped classroom instruction based on their SEED experiences, but a gap exists between individual transformation and transformation of professional practice. It would be tremendously beneficial to capture, with local resources, examples to share with educators across the district:

- What educational practices have changed because of SEED work? SEED leaders should pose this question to the widest variety of SEED practitioners, including administrators, teachers, administrative assistants, counselors, specialists, and so forth.
- What curricula have changed or been designed and enacted as a result of SEED? What student work have these curricula produced? What are the connections of the changes to academic standards? What evidence exists of meeting those standards through SEED approaches? What evidence exists that students are achieving academic success through SEED approaches?
- How can SEED practices link with the professional development of all district educators? How can they become embedded in the professional work of the district? How can powerful ideas, strategies, and curricula be shared so that all can benefit from them?

Several participants relate stories about the successes of previously marginalized students, as related to their teachers' efforts to ensure their equitable access to quality learning experiences. Preparing several case studies that explore the data and details of these examples would be valuable not only in Elk Grove but also beyond the district. As academic achievement data are the coin of the realm in public education in this era of accountability, this effort presents a key opportunity to make the connection between improving student learning and the social and educational context in which it takes place.

In the collective years that documentation team members have been involved in teacher professional development and school reform, we found SEED to be one of the most effective, empowering, and cost-effective forms of professional development we have witnessed for practicing teachers. Over the past five years, over 1,500 Elk Grove educators have devoted literally tens of thousands of *volunteer* hours to improving both how they think about their own identities and practices and the learning lives of children. We observed that the merger of hard work and a hopeful heart helps SEED create special conditions for powerful learning for adults and children.

**It is a common assumption that educators naturally translate new knowledge, insights, and understandings into their practice. (Smith, 2000). Several strong examples exist in Elk Grove of ways that individual teachers have shaped classroom instruction based on their SEED experiences, but a gap exists between individual transformation and transformation of professional practice.**

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## APPENDIX

## TIMELINE OF SEED IN ELK GROVE

## 1997-1998

- Statewide restructuring grant follow-up materials on diversity are sent to Kathy Orihuela. Packet included SEED training information.
- Kathy Orihuela's 1st SEED seminar in Elk Grove, James Rutter Middle School.
- Mid-year: Kathy is invited by her vice principal to present on innovative programs for the district's secondary education department. The Director of Curriculum (and Dr. Odie Douglas) hears Kathy's presentation.
- Odie Douglas asks Kathy Orihuela to give a presentation to the instructional cabinet. Nicole Brown Umi joins Kathy in presenting.
- Odie Douglas calls Peggy McIntosh immediately after the presentation.
- A train-the-trainer group works with "The Color of Fear."
- Summer of 1998: As a result of Kathy's presentation, four individuals (including two of *The Color of Fear* trainers) are asked to attend the National SEED leaders' training.

## 1998-1999

- Three seminars operating in elementary, middle, and high school.
- Trained SEED leaders (Kathy Orihuela, Odie Douglas, Francie Teitelbaum, Manuel Penaloza, and Nicole Brown Umi) are now meeting in a group to facilitate each other's learning.
- Odie Douglas and Barbara Brooks-Barker teach new administrators and new teachers in 1998 and continuing to present. College credit is given to those who participate in these courses, which include SEED & multi-cultural training.
- Spring of 1999: First California SEED Summit meeting in Santa Rosa.
- Spring of 1999: SEED seminar participants and administrator's meeting, big circle, in the James Rutter Library for first end-of-year district-wide SEED gathering.
- Spring and summer of 1999, EGHS student SEED panel shares experiences with secondary administrators, EGHS and JRMS SEED seminars, EGHS Unity Day student participants, EGUSD mentor teachers, and EGHS staff over the course of several months. Francie Teitelbaum videotapes her students talking about the influence of SEED in their lives.
- Summer of 1999: Twelve people attend SEED training; six to national, six to New Jersey.
- SEED breakout sessions offered at quarterly EGUSD Saturday seminars starting in late 1998.
- Kathy Orihuela teaches teacher-credentialing course with a SEED focus at UC Davis.
- Lucent Technologies sends an RFP to selected college presidents asking for proposals for a college/school collaboration. Peggy McIntosh and Emily Style, with Odie Douglas, complete a grant application to Lucent on behalf of Elk Grove SEED Initiative to obtain funding for three years to train 75 people.
- Peggy & Emily ask Minnesota and New Jersey SEED to be equally involved in training EGUSD SEED leaders.
- Nicole Brown Umi presents at monthly District Counselor's meetings.
- Summer of 1999: Elk Grove and Rutter SEED seminars go to the Museum of Tolerance, building bridges between schools.

**1999-2000**

- September of 1999, Brenda Flyswithhawks and Peggy McIntosh are keynote speakers for professional learning Saturday Seminar for the whole district.
- SEED breakout sessions are part of district-wide staff development day.
- Kathy Orihuela, Odie Douglas, Francie Teitelbaum and others are invited to conferences around the state of California, spending their own time to talk about SEED. They present at the California School Board Association, California Teachers Association (twice), and at a gathering of superintendents in Sacramento.
- SEED workshop for EGUSD Parent Connection.
- 1999: Monthly Seminars for all SEED leaders.
- Eight new SEED seminars continue with enrollments of 10-35 people.

**1999-2000**

- Dr. Mykee Fowlin arrives from New Jersey to present to students and adults at Florin High School.
- First Parent SEED Seminar.
- Lucent Funding arrives.
- February, 2000: Willa Cofield, Emily Style, Odie Douglas, Peggy McIntosh, Kathy Orihuela, Manuel Penalosa, Francie Teitelbaum, and Nicole Brown Umi meet in first of three annual Lucent advisory gatherings at the Holiday Inn in Sacramento.
- Twenty-five people are recruited to become SEED leaders via an application process developed by SEED advisory group. Nine individuals attend Minnesota SEED leader training; others attend National or New Jersey.
- Dr. Mykee Fowlin returns from NJ for the summer end-of-year, district-wide SEED celebration after presenting at the district-wide Parent Connection Day, James Rutter Middle School, and two high schools.
- June, 2000: Joyce Bell and Yvonne Robinson attend Elk Grove second end-of-year SEED celebration and meet nine Lucent-funded SEED leaders who will attend the Minnesota training for the first time.
- Elk Grove SEED leaders (SEED advisory members) facilitate the training of new SEED leaders as small-group leaders in Minnesota, New Jersey, and California.
- Trained SEED leaders return to Elk Grove after their summer training. As a result, many more seminars occur in approximately 20 schools at all levels. Most seminars are ongoing, and nearly all facilitators continue.
- After 2000 training, other Sacramento County districts train SEED leaders, and they are invited to join EGUSD SEED leader monthly seminars. SEED is on the road countywide and finds an interest in other districts; districts also approach SEED.
- 2000-2002: Every year, 25 more people take part in training: 75 people are trained during Lucent funding.
- Additional Community and Parent SEED seminars.
- A conscious outreach effort to district elementary schools (40 in the district in Elk Grove) cause the effects of SEED to flourish in elementary schools.

**2000-2001**

- Throughout the three years of Lucent funding, seminars gradually increase and many are ongoing. Seminars available for participation on a continuous basis are held after school. Continuation of seminars is optional as the SEED model is designed to last for nine months, but many people choose to continue beyond these nine months. These three-hour sessions must meet monthly.
- Elementary schools invite other elementary schools to team up to form seminars.
- Release time for Kathy Orihuela and Francie Teitelbaum to support SEED's growth is increased.
- Odie hires clerical support (an Administrative Assistant) for SEED work in Elk Grove through district funding.
- Marcus McGhee becomes a member of the EGUSD SEED Advisory Group.
- At school sites throughout the district, SEED leaders and participants share SEED strategies and materials with colleagues at staff and department meetings, etc.
- 2001-2003: Public Education Dance Alliance—200 high school student dancers come together from neighboring districts. During the day, SEED leaders facilitate discussions among student groups.
- SEED becomes very public, including at UC Davis and College Board.

**2001-2002**

- 2001: Tolerance Education grant is developed to help Elk Grove reach out to students.
- Museum of Tolerance: Training for students and advisors; 3-5 students from each middle school and high school travel with their advisor to LA. Some SEED leaders are also advisors. Training builds on a SEED model; students train, and address issues, and facilitate change in areas of equity impacting other students.
- Five (of the nine) Elk Grove facilitators return for the ninth mid-year Minnesota SEED conference. The original nine included teachers, administrators, parents, and support staff; a mixed group with multiple perspectives.
- SEED helps teachers learn how to close the achievement gap.
- California Standards for the Teaching Profession and SEED are aligned.
- End-of-year events continue. Celebrations include presentations by SEED leaders, Mykee Fowlin, Ken Medema, Taiko drummers, as well as student performers.
- Elk Grove students visit the national SEED leader training to participate in a half-day new leader workshop facilitated by experienced EGUSD SEED Leaders.

**2002-2003**

- SEED seminars continue throughout the district.
- 2003 Spring: SEED creates an assessment, narrative, and questions and begins to use systemic, formal assessments. Assessment occurred in prior work, but now becomes formalized.
- Four new SEED leaders attend summer training.

**2003-04**

- Five new SEED leaders attend summer New Leaders Week.
- Retrospective study of SEED in Elk Grove is conducted by CIDGroup in collaboration with SEED and Elk Grove and with support of Lucent Technologies Foundation.

