

CUS

Research Brief



Artifacts from the classroom of a Toronto District School Board early years educator engaging in critical practitioner inquiry focused on Black student achievement. Nicole was a co-facilitator and research co-investigator for this initiative.

Nicole West-Burns: Intersecting Professional Learning, Research and Knowledge Mobilization

By Audrey Hudson

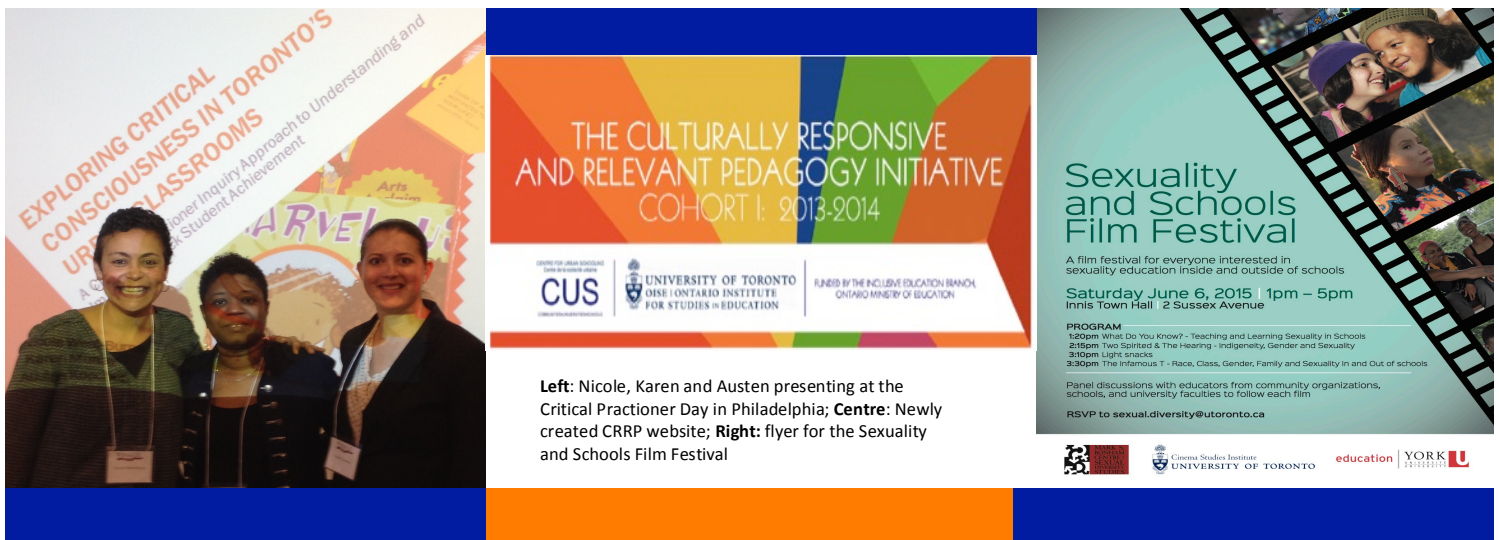


UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
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FOR STUDIES IN EDUCATION

In her seventh year at the Centre, Nicole West-Burns has engaged in several professional learning initiatives as the Director of School Services, including most recently: A collaborative research project focused on Black student achievement with Toronto District School Board; and the creation of tools and resources for an Ontario Ministry of Education, Inclusive Education Branch initiative highlighting Culturally Responsive and Relevant Pedagogy.

Our Mission Statement

The Centre for Urban Schooling was established in 2005 to connect OISE to urban schools and communities. The Centre conducts research on and advocates for critical practice that is focused on how to better serve historically marginalized and racialized children and youth in public schools.



Left: Nicole, Karen and Austen presenting at the Critical Practitioner Day in Philadelphia; **Centre:** Newly created CRRP website; **Right:** flyer for the Sexuality and Schools Film Festival

Exploring Critical Consciousness In Toronto's Urban Classrooms: A Critical Practitioner Inquiry Approach To Understanding And Improving Black Student Achievement

Over this past year, Nicole served as a research co-investigator and professional learning co-facilitator on a collaborative initiative working with K-1 educators representing 15 school sites across Toronto District School Board (TDSB). The educators met regularly for professional learning about the issues tied to student engagement, achievement and critical pedagogy; they engaged in understanding and building their skills as critical practitioner researchers; and they tried new things in their early years classroom spaces.

The research team has gathered artifacts and reflections as stage 1 of the research process and will interview educators in the future about their experiences to add to the data.

Nicole and her research partner and collaborator from TDSB, Karen Murray, presented at the International Conference on Urban Education in Montego Bay, Jamaica in November and in February, with CUS graduate student, Austen Koecher, at the 36th Annual Ethnography conference at the University of Pennsylvania on the Saturday, Critical Practitioner Research Day.

The Culturally Responsive And Relevant Pedagogy Initiative: Capturing A Professional Learning Journey Of Whole School Improvement With A Focus On Equity-Final Reports And Website

In collaboration with former colleagues, Jeff Kugler and Vanessa Russell and Karen Murray from TDSB, Nicole was a part of an Ontario Ministry of Education, Inclusive Education Branch initiative in 2013-14 to engage with two schools and share the learning from their professional journey of equity work. Following the work in schools from last year, this year, Nicole wrote the reports, a professional facilitator's manual and helped to create a web site, which also includes learning modules

and a video documenting the year-long journey. The launch of the website occurred in the OISE library in April, with over 70 attendees. Educators from the initiative spoke about their experiences and how they were influenced by the work.

The newly created CRRP website can be found at: www.cuscrppinitiative.ca

Sexual Diversity Studies & Education

Nicole also served as the CUS representative on the Sexual Diversity Studies & Education Committee at the University of Toronto. A part of that role involved Nicole facilitating a panel at a recent film festival. Nicole spoke with Natasha Garda from TDSB, and Jen Gilbert, from York University about how to have conversations about LGBTQ issues in elementary schooling spaces and what issues the film, "What do you know?" raised for the panelists. A lively audience discussion was held exploring the many entry points into this conversation. The overall film festival was well attended.

Queer Space Chat – 2014/15

...for queer teacher candidates and educators
Led by Shawna Carroll and Nicole West-Burns - Sponsored by The Centre for Urban Schooling

Are you looking for a supportive "free-space" to be with other Queer (LGBT12SQ...) teacher candidates/educators to discuss issues that impact us?

Join us for our first meeting during Queer Orientation 2014: Monday, September 22nd

Meetings for the year:
Mondays 5:00-7:00pm

September 22

October 20

December 1

February 9

April 13



(Courtesy of University of Toronto Positive Space Poster Competition)

RSVP by September 15th to: shawna.carroll@utoronto.ca to register for our first session, September 22nd at 5:00pm.

Meeting location will be emailed prior to the event.



Left to right: Advertisement for Queer Space Chat and Nicole asking a question of the panel debating Hip-Hop's relevance in schools

Queer Space Chat

In the 2014-15 school year, Nicole co-facilitated a group at OISE with Ph.D. student Shawna Carroll, for students who identify as LGBT12SQ. This group, which was named Queer Space Chat, was established as a "free space" for teacher candidates and members of the OISE community to come together and discuss issues tied to gender, sexuality and schooling. Each meeting had a different focus based on the ideas generated from the group; one session focused on "issues that matter"; one session had a panel of LGBT12SQ educators from the Toronto District School Board (TDSB) and the Toronto Catholic District School Board (TCDSB)

share their experiences; and one session focused on representations of queer people in the media.

Hip-Hop STEMposium

Nicole served as the CUS representative on the committee for the TDSB **Free Your Mind: A Hip Hop Education STEMposium**. The event sought to highlight Hip Hop as critical pedagogy, as coined by TDSB Equity Instructional Leader, Ramon San Vicente. The conference sought to explore Hip Hop as a way to engage, critique and challenge societal inequities; create a space to discuss issues of engagement and achievement for all youth; and connect this work to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) through innovation, inquiry and problem-based learning.

At the conference, Nicole facilitated a "Meet & Greet" with Dr. Christopher Emdin, Associate Professor in the Department of Mathematics, Science and Technology at Teachers College, Columbia University. Approximately 25 graduate students and teachers from Philadelphia, Michigan and California attended. On Saturday, Nicole was also part of the town hall conversation with local educators and activists.



Next year, Nicole will no longer be with the Centre as the funding for her position is not available; however, she will remain connected as a CUS Associate and has also recently been hired to teach Anti-Discrimination Education in OISE's Master's of Teaching program. Additionally, she is looking to do some consulting and writing connected to her most recent research. She is excited for the adventures to come.

Thank you for interest in the Centre for Urban Schooling! Let's stay in touch. To join our list serve and receive announcements about our events, please email: audrey.hudson@mail.utoronto.ca with the subject heading: Put me on the CUS list serve.

Check out our website and find us on social media!

<http://cus.oise.utoronto.ca>



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