



McGrath Training Systems

## CASE STUDY

## Cultural Diversity Training

Pleasant Valley School District  
Camarillo, CA

Dr. Luis Villegas  
Superintendent

# How to Value Cultural Differences and Create a Climate of Respect that Thrives on Diversity

In 2007, as the new leader of Pleasant Valley School District in Camarillo, CA, Superintendent Dr. Luis Villegas saw an opportunity to improve the school district's culture and climate by recognizing and capitalizing on the diversity of its faculty and staff.

He worked with his Human Resources Director on a strategy to build a stronger, more unified team of educators and staff. They wanted a training program that would help people recognize the valuable differences of the individuals working for the district.

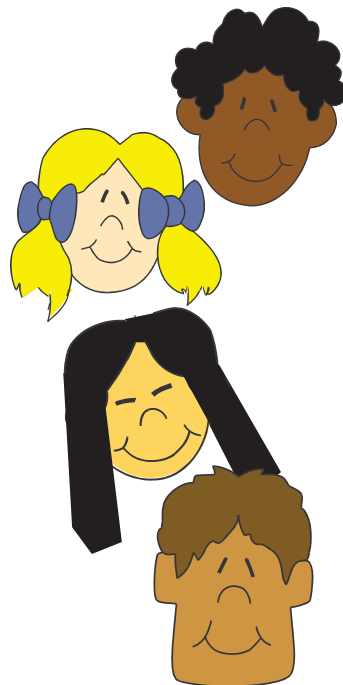
### A Springboard to Change

Dr. Villegas feels the McGrath Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Training is just what his district needed to begin a transformation under his leadership. Villegas said, "We were focusing on how to be more effective in dealing with the differences among and between employee groups, and to do that in a collegial setting. As of today, our principals have conducted the McGrath Cultural Diver-

sity Training at their sites for all employees, including their support staff. The McGrath Train the Trainer Program was very comprehensive and showed us how to do it."

### What McGrath Training Provides

McGrath Training Systems' Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Training was the perfect solution to their needs. The program explores the biases and prejudices individuals may have—whether they are conscious of those feelings or not. The microcultures that people self-identify with are also discussed, along with the biases associated with those microcultures. Participants learn about protected classifications, such as age, gender, marital status, race, sexual orientation, and illegal discrimination. Importantly, they learn a five-point criterion for identifying illegal discrimination. Finally, learners are introduced to the unique McGrath FICA problem-solving tool that allows people to base their actions on facts, not biases or perceptions.



In Pleasant Valley a McGrath Trainer conducted a train-the-trainer session with

the principals and district office administrators. This training program equipped the district-designated local trainers to deliver course content to their employees throughout the year, to keep cultural diversity and inclusiveness a fresh, living practice in the district's schools. McGrath Training Systems provided a PowerPoint program and Instructor Manual for the district trainers' use in working with their faculty and staff members.

### Training with a Passion

RaeAnne Michael, principal of Dos Caminos Elementary, was one of those trained to train the McGrath Cultural Diversity and Inclusion Training within her school district. She conducted her first 75-minute training session with 23 teachers from her building on Dec. 4, 2007.

"I felt very comfortable delivering the training," Ms. Michael said, "and the staff rated me very strong—almost all 4's and 5's (on a 5-point scale). The training with McGrath almost over prepared me! The school has a very diverse population. It is 60 percent Hispanic and 17 languages are spoken on campus. I focused on discrimination and cultural diversity, and on microcultural groups, which the staff found very interesting."

"We talked about whom to go to if they're feeling violated, discriminated against or uncomfortable. Our group has four men, and the rest are women, so we recognized that there could be reverse discrimination. It was a great conversation. I have a real passion for this topic. I feel that everyone should

always feel safe and comfortable, wherever they are."

### Perception is Reality

Delivering such sensitive content can be challenging, but school leaders were impressed with the McGrath trainer's friendly, open approach and her deep knowledge of how schools work.



"We have some really great people here and they are very interested in having a cooperative administrative team that involves all people. Before this training, we didn't have that. This really helped us springboard from where we were into where we need to be."

- Dr. Villegas, Superintendent  
Pleasant Valley School District

Villegas said, "I was very comfortable with her presentation style. At one point, the presenter alluded to the fact that prejudice happens to everybody. We have a tendency to look at other people differently, even though we may be from the same religion, the same ethnic group, the same racial group. I saw that this training allowed people to touch on these topics and to verbalize their feelings on certain things. We don't give

people enough opportunity to do that. So, it was a good beginning."

### Walking the Talk

Both Dr. Villegas and Principal Michael recognize that the district's investment in this training must be kept alive. Ms. Michael plans to make diversity discussions part of her regular staff meetings, drawing on her McGrath training. Dr. Villegas recommends that school districts make such training part of their annual, standard professional development package



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