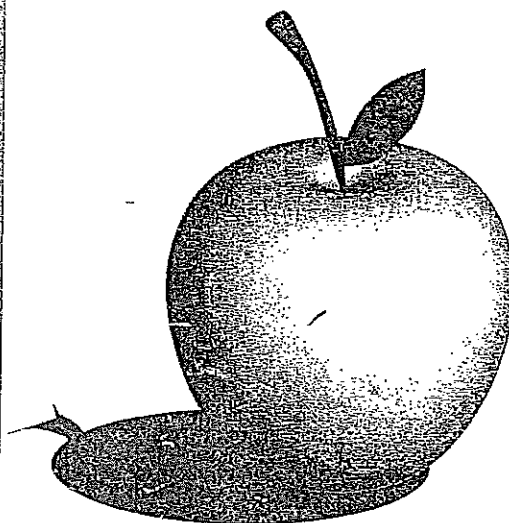
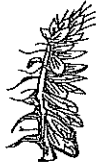


DISCOVERING OUR EXPERIENCES:

Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 1 SPRING 1997





**Discovering
Our Experiences: Studies
in Bilingual/ESL Education**

Volume 4

Fall 1997

**“Critical Knowledge Beyond the School:
Teachers as The-Ones-Who-Learn”**



Discovering Our Experiences: Studies in Bilingual/ESL Education, Volume 4

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Special thanks to the Center for Mexican American Studies and the Center for Immigration Research at the Univ. of Houston for their financial support.

The identity of the individuals whose narratives we present herein are withheld to protect their privacy unless they gave us explicit permission to use their names.

**Discovering Our Experiences:
Studies in Bilingual/ESL
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Fall 1997**

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Excerpts on medicinal herbs from:

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*This volume is dedicated to teachers who follow
in the footsteps of Paulo Freire and understand so well that
by reaching one student at a time they envision their own
transformation as well as sow the seeds of tomorrow.*

Introduction

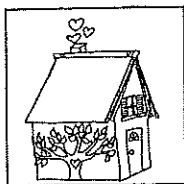
The compilation of papers featured in this volume represent the research of university and public school educators who have as one of their key professional goals to improve the educational opportunities of all students. The work is a result of a collaboration among four university faculty members from the University of Houston and eight teachers from Houston area school districts. All of the teachers work with diverse student population, perhaps the most important motivator for becoming involved in exploring and developing alternative means by which to make the curriculum more meaningful and responsive to the needs of their students. The collaborators first met in November of last year and continued the research based on the Funds of Knowledge for Teaching which we had the privilege of learning from the work of various colleagues, among them, Cathy Amanti, a teacher from the Tucson, Arizona area, and Dr. Norma González, an anthropologist with the University of Arizona. The Funds of Knowledge project design seemed very appropriate for the schools in our metroplex area, especially considering the large recent immigrant student enrollment in many of them. Thanks to a small grant procured from the University of Houston's Center for Immigration Research, we were able to offer compensation to the participating teachers for making time in their busy schedules to visit the homes of their students, to meet with the collaborative on the first Saturday of the month, and to collect the data and write their report. The four University faculty members provided the support and assistance in unique and different ways depending on how each could manage their time and resources. After seven months, several home visits, a paper presentation at a national conference, and several drafts of the final paper, Volume Four of **Discovering Our Experiences** emerged. The work paid off and best of all, we developed friendships that will remain a part of us for a long time to come.

The first article by Leslie Patterson focuses on the unique role of a teacher as learner that underscores the theme of the research project as well as this volume. In a constructivist framework, teachers and students share the teaching and learning tasks, creating a community of learners that is conducive to meaningful learning. Patterson and the teacher researchers discuss the changes, indeed, the transformations that they experienced as a result of their active participation in this research project. One of the key tasks that contributed to the change process was the ethnographic techniques that the teachers employed in learning about their students and their families. Within an anthropological perspective, teachers seem to learn in unique ways by suspending their role as teacher and adopting the role of ethnographer. In their articles, the teacher researchers elaborate on their learning process through a personal and experiential lens.

In the fourth article, "A New Look at Parent Involvement," Patterson and Baldwin discuss their views of the complex adaptive system applied to educational settings. Their cogent interpretation of the phenomenon and the explanation for why educators need to change their behavior, especially in regard to parental involvement, is innovative and important for all educators.

In the final article of this volume, "Breaking the Silence: Inquiry, Reflection, and Voice in Teacher Research Collaboratives," I call attention to the need for teacher researchers to share with others their work and their views. Without the dialogue and exchange of ideas, teacher research lacks what can be an invaluable contribution to the field of education.

Irma Guadarrama



Zingiber officinalis/ginger root: Used medicinally since the ancient Greeks, it is a worldwide herbal remedy given for poor circulation, lung infections, and flatulence.

Teachers as The-Ones-Who-Learn

by Leslie Patterson

The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow.

—Freire, 1972, p. 67

As a teacher educator, I have “done” multicultural education by trying to infuse my teaching with facts about diverse cultures. I assigned readings from folklore, research reports on cultural practices and linguistic differences, and powerful statements by social and political activists. Apparently I thought that the more my students and I learned about the diverse cultures of the children in our schools, the more tolerant and supportive we would be in our attitudes and our actions. I thought that information alone could prepare teachers and future teachers to build responsive curriculum, to plan instruction with students’ strengths and needs in mind. I think I also had a vague notion that this information would encourage teachers to take some sort of social action outside the classroom. As I consider it now, all that reading and talking never seemed to make much of a difference.

My recent experience as a

research team member in a study modeled after the Funds of Knowledge project begun by Moll and his associates (Gonzales, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzales, & Amanti, 1993; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) has convinced me that I can find more powerful ways to invite teachers to develop cultural sensitivity and a willingness to

Second-hand information is not enough--we must make opportunities for teachers to go outside the school, to go into the community, to get to know the students in their homes....

take social and political action. Second-hand information is not enough—we must make opportunities for teachers to go outside the school, to go into the community, to get to know the students in their homes, and to create their own information, first-hand. Christine Sleeter applies the same principle to students:

To empower students to participate effectively in their civic community, we must change the ways in which they acquire,

view, and evaluate knowledge. . . Students must also be given the opportunities wledge themselves so that they can develop a sophisticated appreciation of the nature and limitations of knowledge and understand the extent to which knowledge is a social construction that reflects the social, political, and cultural context in which it is formulated.
—Sleeter, 1992, p. 126

This potential for transformation became clear in my interview with the two secondary teacher researchers in the project, Liz Keith and Shelia Baldwin. The families Liz and Shelia chose to invite into this project were similar in several ways. Both families were from Mexico, although one family had been involved in migrant farm work around the U.S. for 18 years, recently settling in this city, and the other family had recently come from Matamoros, where the entire family had managed a photography business. The students in these families were generally well-behaved and, to some extent, successful in their school work.

Liz and Shelia were not acquainted with each other before this project, but they have worked productively together and recently collaborated on a proposal to present at a professional conference. They are,

however, at very different points in their careers. Liz is at the beginning of her career. When the project began, Liz had taught English in an inner city middle school for one year and was beginning to work on her initial teacher certification.

Shelia had taught reading and English as a Second Language in a large suburban district for 16 years, with previous experience as a social worker in Chicago. During the course of the project, she finished a doctoral program in reading and multicultural education. She has taught as an adjunct in a teacher education program, has led numerous staff development sessions, and is a published teacher researcher.

Although Liz and Shelia are at very different places in their individual professional development, their interview responses suggest that they experienced parallel transformations in three areas: 1) they found themselves challenging old assumptions about their students; 2) they made complex instructional changes in response to their findings from the home visits; 3) they began taking on new professional roles outside their classrooms; and 4) they made discoveries about ethnographic research. They both attribute these changes to their home visits and subsequent reflections on the Funds of Knowledge present in these students' home cultures. Although Liz's and Shelia's separate articles detail their individual findings, the following discussion summarizes the parallel transformations emerging from an analysis of my interview with them. The similarities are striking, and the differences suggest questions

...my going into somebody's home and talking to them...(showed me) that I was just wrong. My assumptions were wrong.

about how teachers at various stages in their careers respond to a Funds of Knowledge teacher research experience.

Discovering and Challenging Old Assumptions

When asked about their most significant learning from the project, Liz and Shelia agreed that the interviews with these students and their families forced them to question assumptions that determine their attitudes toward the kids, assumptions that shape their most basic instructional decisions. Liz was the first to mention these assumptions:

...my going into somebody's home and talking to them...(showed me) that I was just wrong. My assumptions were wrong. And I hear teachers talking all the time in the halls and in the teacher's lounge, "Oh these parents yu-ta-da-ta-da—they don't care for their kids, they don't do this...they're like this...and they have no idea what they are talking about because they have not been to one single student's home or talked to one single parent about what their aspirations are, and what ideas they have for their children. And it's a shame, you know, for so many teachers to assume that these parents don't love their children and that they want less for them, which is not the case at all.

Although Shelia has worked for years with struggling students from all ethnic groups, and for the last five years with ESL students, this research also forced her to confront her assumptions about her students' capabilities:

Why did it take me so long to get to where I am now? I have worked with students for a number of years, but I think it was because we were so caught up with being within the law, providing courses for our students to take, getting enough credits passing the state mandated test...but I was perceiving it also that language was going to interfere with their achievement. I really feel like that now. That I was saying that, too. But now I'm saying, 'Oh no!' But I really think I must have been caught up in that as well, plus it's made me become very political.

Shelia goes on to cite an example of a recent policy decision that discriminates against ESL students:

I think about how the state has now said that ESL students have to pass both reading and writing TAAS in order to exit ESL. Where are our English speaking kids who are restricted to remedial classes by the state before they pass reading and writing TAAS? They aren't! So why is this stipulation placed on our second language students. It really does prevent them from taking courses they need in order to get out of school...

Liz talked about how her visits

in this home changed her perception of the students as real people who have unique and rich lives outside of school:

Meeting a student and their family in their home, as opposed to at school...puts a whole different spin on how you perceive your students, you know—as other human beings, as opposed to that herd that comes shuffling through your door every 85 minutes. The student I visited doesn't have nearly as good a living arrangement as I do, and things still get to me. So things are going to get to my students...They are just little people...

Both Liz and Shelia repeatedly mentioned their concern that many of their colleagues are teaching according to assumptions that ignore the rich experiences that these students bring. One particular example is the fact that teachers generally view the trips to Mexico merely as an interference with school time, rather than international travel that enriches the lives of these young adults. Another example is when Shelia's student reported that in her cooking class, the teacher told students to cook rice. As the girl and her partner began cooking it as they did at home—frying the rice before adding water—the teacher corrected the girls and made them begin again—“That's not the way to do it,” she said. Shelia also mentioned the difference in the treatment of foreign exchange students, in spite of their limited English proficiency, and the treatment of these students who have recently arrived from Mexico and Central America. It is immediately assumed that the Latino students need remediation in order to be

successful.

Throughout the debriefing sessions, the interviews, and their final reports, both Liz and Shelia repeatedly cited examples of the assumptions they had given up as they had learned more about these students, their families, and their Funds of Knowledge.

Making Instructional Changes

The instructional changes that these two teachers reported seemed to fall into three closely related categories—the shifts in perception discussed above, an increased recognition and use of students' background knowledge, and the recognition that students need to see relevance in school tasks and to engage in inquiry. The following comments address complex combinations of all three of these shifts.

Liz reports that her participation in this project has changed her teaching in subtle ways, for example, in the way she “tweaks” writing assignments to be more responsive to students' potential funds of knowledge.

I guess being aware of my students' Funds of Knowledge being different from my own alters my thinking somewhat...I approach things in an accessible way... By doing this Funds of Knowledge research, now I know what at least one of my students knows. Now that I specifically have some ideas about where students may be coming from, I actually have a place to start building. Now I have a real idea of what one of my students is coming to school with...and as I continue this and visit more students' homes, I will build a better and better, fuller picture of what my students come to school

with so I can exploit that in the classroom and make an environment and assignments that will foster their learning.

Shelia talks about the specific information she wants to know about her students early in the year:

I want to get to know and need to get to know, my kids right up front I want to know more about their home situations even before I have a chance to get out there. I want to know if they are working. I want to know who's in the home. And if the parents are working, and when they are working and are they very active in a church.

Her concern with the church membership is directly related to what she found as she visited her students' home—that they had become a part of a church and spent four nights a week, two hours Saturday, and at least four hours Sunday at church meetings.

My attitude before was that they are spending so much time at that church; they are not getting their homework done. I don't look at it that way any more. That is their social life as well as their spiritual life. And it is an important way for them to adapt to this whole new way of life.

Shelia seems not only to have integrated information she was learning about her students, but she made specific changes in the processes she used within her teaching. In talking about a culture studies unit she had used in previous years, she indicated that she had originally planned to

have the students choose a country or an ethnic group and do a research project about it. Her plans included trips to the library and Internet searches. As she visited her family and analyzed her notes, she decided to reframe the unit so that students would be able to become ethnographers within their own communities:

Because of my learning about this family's culture. . . I changed the approach we used, inviting them to be like cultural anthropologists, so to speak. It was not an easy project, but the results were good. I was really excited with their write-ups of their observations and their interviews. And then I asked them to evaluate their projects. What did they really learn from it, not just information, but as people? And their comments were really what I'd hoped for. (They realized that) many of us came here for the same reasons... They felt it was worthwhile... It was a valuable experience.

This shift in Shelia's teaching of this unit was prompted, not only by her own use of anthropological research methodologies, but also by the information about diversity within the Mexican culture that she was learning from the family she visited:

... I just changed the way I approached that particular project after I visited the family a couple of times and heard from them about the difference in the states in Mexico, the differences in dialect, and certain traditions, and the way they prepare food

and all that kind of thing, and I just wonder if our own kids know about that.

As Shelia's students worked individually and in groups, many of them chose to study particular states in Mexico. One chose the low-rider subculture; another chose the Tejano culture. Shelia required each student to integrate information from interviews, observations of celebrations, work sites, etc., and secondary sources in a report for the class. She reports that one of the most important discoveries the class made was that there are clear differences, even between groups from various Mexican states.

This shift in her instruction does not build solely on specific information Shelia gleaned from this project, but it also reflects her changing attitudes and her realizations about the power of personal inquiry. In a very real sense, she invited her students to

As she visited her family and analyzed her notes, she decided to reframe the unit so that students would be able to become ethnographers within their own communities.

join her as ethnographers in the study of Funds of Knowledge.

As we thought about the original Funds of Knowledge research, we remembered that we had expected the home visits to yield particular content to add to the curriculum. Liz and Shelia found the experience much more

complex than that. They agreed that, at first, they were puzzled about how to use the "facts" they were learning.

Shelia: I struggled with that a lot. I thought. Now what am I learning out here that I can put in my curriculum?

Liz: Yes...that's exactly it...and I didn't find specific things,

Liz seemed to be discovering as much about herself as a teacher and learner as she was learning about her students or the family she visited. When I commented that they seemed to be saying that their teaching processes changed more than the content—or at least that the processes changed first and the content changes followed, Liz interrupted with a laugh and said, "I certainly changed first." As Liz talked about making her writing assignments more relevant to her kids' funds of knowledge, she related it to her discovery about herself as a writer:

I know that I do my best writing when something is important to me or when I feel like writing about it or when I want to write about it, and that wasn't necessarily obvious to me before, but you know, as a writer, that's how I am and that's how students are, too.

Although these changes were sometimes gradual and always complex, it seems clear that participating in this Funds of Knowledge project triggered some important changes in these teachers' thinking and in their teaching decisions.

Stepping Into New Professional Roles

Although Liz and Sheila have very different experiences as teachers, they both expanded their professional roles during the course of this project. As a second-year teacher still on emergency certification, Liz was accepting a significant challenge joining this project. She had no experience as a researcher, and only one year of experience as a teacher. As she gained confidence in what she was learning, however, she agreed to make a presentation about this project for her faculty colleagues. She reports that, unlike most faculty meetings, many of her colleagues actually listened to her presentation and asked pertinent questions. She invited them to join her in a similar project next year, and four teachers have indicated that they will do that. She is currently developing a grant proposal to get some support for that project. Liz is stepping into leadership roles on her campus, and that shows unusual professional growth for a third-year teacher.

As an experienced teacher researcher, Shelia reports that this project has prompted her to become more political—to become a more vocal advocate for her ESL students:

I noticed one of the things I kept going back to and that's why I'm wondering if I'm being too political. You really need to be an advocate for your students. I realized that after getting to know this family and

Shelia's advocacy began as she focused on the immediate needs of the students in the family she visited.

the resourcefulness of each member of the family. With a very limited education—all the parents had done over the years to earn a living—you know, with only a second and third grade education...and what they have sacrificed for their children to learn English in this country. Whether they stay in the United States or they go back to Mexico, their kids are going to have a much better life as a result of this and that's what they want for their children—which is no different from what we want for our children.

And in the public schools, well, in my school, I think I have become acutely aware of how we need to really work on behalf of our ESL students I think the language aspect is looked at as a barrier so they are being kept from courses and opportunities, because of language as though they can't learn as well as students who speak English. It is a misconception, and I think it is something that we really have to focus on to change teachers' attitudes about being able to learn a second language. It is an asset, and not a deficit.

Shelia's advocacy began as she focused on the immediate needs of the students in the family she visited. Shelia chose a family with two children in her classes—Christina, 16, a successful student, and Carlos, 18, who had already graduated in Mexico and was coming to

school in the U.S. only to learn English. When Shelia found that Carlos had worked in the family photography business in Matamoros, she went to the journalism teacher to see if they could get him into a more challenging elective course than he was currently taking. Christina, in a private conversation, complained that the “sheltered” ESL classes weren't helping her learn English because students spoke too much Spanish to one another. As a result Shelia approached her departmental colleagues with a proposal, and they changed the criteria for students who were ready to exit the “sheltered” classes and enter the mainstream classes.

As Shelia began thinking about the institutional constraints on the ESL students, she began addressing some other issues. She was successful in assuring, for the first time, that ESL students would be screened for the gifted and talented program. She approached the principal about the need for multicultural awareness among teachers throughout the campus, and next fall there will be a new committee formed to address that need. The changing demographics of that campus suggest that there will be larger and larger numbers of Hispanic students coming into that attendance area, so this committee will attempt to take a proactive stance to prepare teachers to meet the needs of these students. Shelia has also persuaded an ESL teacher partner to work with her next fall to visit all the families of ESL students. In multiple ways, Shelia has certainly lived out her new commitment to be an advocate for her students.

Gaining Insights into this Research Process

Finally, in their interviews, Liz and Shelia discussed some insights about the research process in this particular project. Specifically, they were concerned with the stance of a teacher researcher during home visits:

Shelia: *Our purpose for the research is different. . . They are the experts teaching us and we are their guests. We are the students.*

Liz: *. . . it's a big attitude shift.*

Leslie: *For research or as a teacher or both?*

Liz: *Both, I guess. One and the same. Because you are not going into someone's home with the authority of the teacher, but as the learner. And there's a certain amount of humility that goes into learning from someone in their home and being respectful and polite and thinking in those terms, that you want to take something away—something potentially very important to your job...*

The emerging personal relationships with the family members were critical for both Liz and Shelia. Their role as researcher was clearly secondary to their growing personal relationships with the parents. They were both concerned that taking field notes was intrusive and made the family members, especially the parents, a bit self-conscious. For that reason the tape recorder was a necessary tool. Shelia even found that it was helpful to ask the mother to show her how to

cook favorite family foods, so that the cooking lesson became the context for conversations. Both teachers were concerned about respecting the privacy of each family. In fact, the mutual respect and acquaintanceship coming from these home visits clearly led Liz and Shelia to see these and other students differently at school. As discussed above, these relationships led Liz and Shelia to different kinds of teaching decisions and professional involvement. Shelia explained her relationship with the family this way:

My hostess was very open. Talking was not a problem. . . I think they really did enjoy having me come to visit. It could have been for the same reason, that I was interested in knowing about the culture, but the other side of it, too, because we did a lot of cooking. The Mother showed me how to make certain things, and then they wanted to know how to make pizza. So I took the ingredients to make pizza. . . and the last thing we are going to do is to make lasagna.

The emerging personal relationships with the family members were critical for both Liz and Shelia.

So I think in a sense it is an exchange. I feel like that's a part of it too, that they are learning from me, as well.

Liz and Shelia also came to recognize how a Funds of Knowledge project is never really finished:

That's another thing I was thinking about. As a population of a school changes, these Funds of Knowledge are going to change, regardless of what the population is changing to. The study I do this year may not have anything to do with my school ten years from now because of time and what happens over time. . . this is automatically kind of an ongoing project because it's not static. As the population changes so will the Funds of Knowledge.

Further, Liz goes on to connect her growing feeling of empowerment as a teacher with that process of ongoing inquiry and change in response to student needs:

And I guess the awareness that this is not the sort of thing you can just do once makes it a different kind of thing. Just knowing that puts you in the driver's seat in terms of where you go and what you do with your class...

Conclusion

Just as Liz and Shelia had to change some of their old assumptions and their professional actions in light of what they learned about their students' Funds of Knowledge, I am having to change some of my old ideas. My decision to have my teacher education students merely read and talk about cultural diversity and social action are based on wrong assumptions. Through this Funds of Knowledge project I have become more convinced that the deep learning is in the action, and that powerful professional growth can happen in our

Through this Funds of Knowledge project I have become more convinced that the deep learning is in the action, and that powerful professional growth can happen in our ongoing inquiries into who our students really are within the living realities of their families and their communities.

ongoing inquiries into who our students really are within the living realities of their families

and their communities. According to Paulo Friere, we "become jointly responsible for a process in which we all grow." That kind of learning will transform our work, our students' lives, and the communities we all share.

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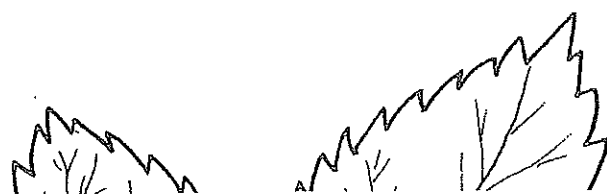
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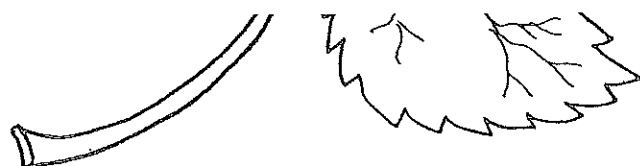
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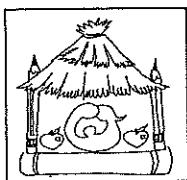
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Throughout the history of human civilization, people have learned to use the organic forms of life for medicinal purposes. As a result we have a large body of knowledge on the uses of plants, animals and minerals for the various ailments that plague the human body. Of great interest to many of us is how home or natural remedies are often created within the various social and cultural contexts. In keeping with the theme of learning and valuing the household and other funds of knowledge, we include various bits of information on the medicinal uses of herbs.





Matricaria recutita/wild chamomile: Used internally as a gentle relaxing sedative, for gastritis, calming a nervous stomach and helps relieve migraines.

Lessons From the Heart: A Teacher's Journey Toward Advocacy

by Shelia Baldwin

As I reflect on my own background, it is rather surprising for me to be where I am today. I was raised in all white suburbs of Chicago. My father had completed two years of junior college and my mother completed high school. My mother was a homemaker while my father was part owner of a company with his father which provided us with a comfortable living. I was offered dance and swim lessons both of which I excelled in and had to make a choice at the age of 10 or 11. I chose swimming to which I was seriously committed throughout my adolescence. I attended school with only white children until my first two years of high school when I went to a high school that served another community with a culturally mixed population. This community had a large Italian working class, Mexican migrant families, and African-Americans, as well as white. I don't recall having any difficulties going to a school with a multicultural population. I do remember racial flareups on a couple of occasions. Too, just like today, there was a strong emphasis on athletics of which we had good football, basketball, and track teams. I remem-

ber my older sister was mayor of the high school my freshman year. She had meetings at our house that included some African-American students, specifically male athletes. They were her friends. My only experience with people other than white was an African-American couple who would babysit us when my parents went fishing in Minnesota. Ernie worked in the machine shop of my dad's company.

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that had been built in our community. It was all white and predominantly middle/upper class. I don't remember ever questioning the "whiteness" of our school. Nor do I remember much about the few students who came from a recognized lower socio-economic area. Apparently, I was oblivious just like many of the white middle/upper class high school students where I teach today because we were the dominant culture.

My interest in multicultural

education must have been lying dormant in me, waiting for acknowledgement. After attending the state university for a year and a half and a local community college, I transferred to the University of Mississippi from which I graduated. I entered the year after it was integrated. I believe my years there began the awakening of my interest in multiculturalism. I do recall having one of the two African-American students in my Russian History class. He sat way off by himself in a small tiered lecture room. I recollect my thoughts when at a KA fraternity party, several inebriated fraternity brothers embraced the African-American musicians as though they were brothers.

I had been asked numerous times why I chose to go to school so far away from home, learning from many that they had never been further north than Memphis and had no intention of going. I think the real jolt came when I was attending a party of my fiancé's parents, and I was asked about the disappearance of the three civil rights workers. I wanted to believe that the people in the South would not kill them just because they were trying to help the Blacks.

With my Sociology degree in hand and a new husband, I started work as a caseworker for the Cook County Department of

Public Aid on the north side of Chicago. My caseload introduced me to the disabled, the elderly, and dependent families of culturally diverse backgrounds who had to rely on public assistance to survive. I felt like what the agency wanted from me was to be an investigator to detect fraud. From there, I went to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services where I worked in the foster care department until our move to Connecticut in 1967.

Twelve years and three children later we were transferred to the Houston area. Upon arriving home after her first day of school, my daughter came running into the house saying, "Mommy, you should see where the children on my bus live!" She was talking about an area near our subdivision that is known as Milltown. At one time a lumber mill there employed a lot of African-Americans who had settled there. The mill closed but the people remained in rundown, dilapidated frame houses. I realized my children had never experienced anything like that coming from a bedroom community of New York City. As much as I liked Connecticut, I knew that our children were not being exposed to the diversity that makes up this country's population.

After making the decision to pursue a teaching certificate instead of a Master in Social Work, I completed the necessary coursework and accepted a teaching position with an alternative program in our school district. I worked for five years there with drug offenders, juvenile delinquents, and students who could not function in

the large, traditional setting of our high school. After five years with that program, I realized I needed to work with a different student population to test my own ability as a teacher. I moved to the high school where I taught TEAMS (like TAAS) reading and basic language arts. Once again, I was working with students who were experiencing difficulty in school. My introduction to ESL students happened when nine were placed in my basic (low track) language arts I class. At that time, I was experimenting with reading/writing workshop and had these students participate right along with the English-speaking students. What a learning experience that was and continues to be today in my work with ESL students in developing literacy in English.

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My choice to become a teacher was the right one. I love it, and I have continued to learn, completing a Master in Education with an emphasis in reading, and a Ph.D in curriculum and instruction with an emphasis in multicultural education. In an effort to improve my high school Spanish and experience life in a different culture, I spent three weeks immersed in the Costa Rican culture. Although a short stay, it had a profound effect on me. Most notably I learned that we English speakers in the language school did just as my students would do, speak our native language every chance we

got! I could empathize with my high school ESL students.

Although I haven't been able to repeat an immersion experience, I am making an effort to reach a level of fluency in Spanish. I want to be able to converse with my students' parents and be able to speak another language. The attempts I have made to communicate in the parents' language have been appreciated and they, in turn, feel better about using the English they know.

School and Community

Chaney High School is located in the incorporated community of Chaney that is approximately 40 miles north of Houston. According to the 1990 census, the population of Chaney was 27,610. Of that number, 13,656 were male and 13,954 were female. The majority of the population is white at 20,558; those of Hispanic origin number 4,811; the African-American population is the third largest with 3,701; and the remaining 3,351 consist of American Indian, Asian, and "other." Chaney serves as the county seat encompassing about 1,047 miles. The Chamber of Commerce records show that Montgomery County, in which Chaney is located, is the third fastest growing county in the state and that Chaney's population today is 32,290.

Chaney High School is a microcosm of its community with the total school population numbering 2,450, of which the white population is the majority (1,715) Hispanics number 465, African-American 221, and "other" 49. However, the demographics are changing in our school as a result of a new school

glass wall clock. Hanging on the wall on the other side of the dining room entry is a large photo of Cristobal standing next to a vintage car. This photo has been mounted on a wood backing with a decoupage treatment applied, a technique perfected by Mr. Garcia. Attached to this photo is a blue ribbon Cristobal had won for an electronics project at a state competition. Another photo, with the same treatment as the one of Cristobal, hanging above the three-cushioned couch near the front corner of the room depicted three of the daughters at a wedding.

The dining room had bare wood floors. A door way to the right led to the hallway and three bedrooms and bathroom. In the corner beyond that doorway was an oval laminated table with four chairs. Straight ahead from the living room and to the left of the dining table was the entry into the kitchen. On the left of the entry sat a modern sewing machine enclosed in its own wooden cabinet. It was open as though it is used often. Ceramic spoons of different sizes decorate the wall above the sewing machine. Around the corner from the sewing machine is a couch located under double windows covered with coral mini-blinds.

The kitchen is narrow with '50's fixtures. To the right is a full size gas stove with counter space and cabinets, both above and below, finishing that wall. The sink is on the back wall with a window above it overlooking the back yard. A door leading to a little porch with two steps going down to the yard is located next to the sink. Clothes line extends from the house to a large shade tree where the laundry is hung to dry. Across from the

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cabinets is a washing machine with a window behind it. Finishing out the kitchen is a refrigerator.

I went into one bedroom, Cristobal's, when they wanted to show me his repair projects various people had brought to him. The room was small, no rug, single bed in corner covered with a white bedspread. A chest of drawers and a closet housed his clothes. A console TV awaited repair with various other smaller pieces. The room had two windows, one on the side and back. What I noticed most about their home was the lack of clutter. It was neat, adequately furnished with necessities, and seemingly comfortable. I did not notice any print in the way of books, newspapers, or magazines. Mrs. García did bring out a book from the bedroom area she had used to teach herself English. Also, the family does not have a television set.

What I Learned

I arranged our meetings by writing a letter in Spanish that Carolina took home to her mom. I had learned by talking with Carolina that Fridays were good because her mom did not work on Fridays. All four of the visits happened on a Friday afternoon. They averaged around two hours a visit, except the last one that extended to four hours because we made tamales, pizza, and had dinner together.

I realized as I reflected on my

field notes contemplating what I learned from being involved in this research that I could categorize my findings under three questions:

1. How has my participation in the Funds of Knowledge study affected me personally?
2. How has my participation affected my classroom instruction?
3. How has my participation affected my input into policy and curricular decisions?

After getting acquainted with my family, I became acutely aware of the sacrifices families like the Garcías were making in order to give their children a shot at a better life through education and bilingualism. They live with insecurity, a restriction on their freedom, and the dislocation and disruption of their family. When Mrs. García arrived here four years ago last April, she was leaving behind her husband, Gerardo of twenty-plus years, her home, the family photography business, friends, and security. One daughter, Maria, and son-in-law were here because Maria wanted to be close to the aunt, her dad's sister and her cousins who were living here. Carolina arrived here in June that year after she finished her school year in Mexico. Cristobal came here a year later. It was apparent after my first visit that this is a close, united family. They spoke with pride and warmth of their family. As

Carolina told me during a conversation we had together the last day of school, "It has been hard to be separated. We have never been apart before." Liliana exhibits an independence and strength that is admirable. She has moved several times in the short time living here. That might explain the sparse furnishings and lack of clutter in their home. She has worked as a housekeeper in which the family did not know Spanish, and she knew little English, but she said, "We got along all right." She showed me an old English grammar book *Ingles-Costina*, published in 1977, that she was using to teach herself English. However, she explained, "I can read and write English, but I don't know pronunciation. I can't talk, put together words into sentences." I commented that I have the same problem! She had been taking adult ESL classes at the neighborhood school but had to stop when she got the job at the broom factory. She attributes some of her difficulty to learning English to her third grade education, not having the primary language base from which to draw.

The reason she gave for coming was, "So Carolina can learn English." I remember being surprised, expecting her to say more. Cristobal helped me to understand during our lunch interview at school. I commented to him about the sacrifice their family was making leaving their home in Mexico, leaving family (a married daughter and son, grandfather), leaving their photography business. "I see the value you place on English. The opportunities it can bring."

Cristobal agreed, "Yes, I can

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go back to Mexico and get a job too easy because I know English."

Carolina apprised me of this as well. During our January visit, I was discussing the dilemma with many of our students not being legal. She said simply, "They come here to learn English."

I had not considered the bilingualism as an avenue to a better life in Mexico. These children will be equipped with the tools to seek a better life in either the American or Mexican economy, wherever their circumstances lead them. Aren't some of us telling our children the same thing? Aren't we providing our children opportunities to live in other countries to learn another language? It hasn't been widespread because we have a provincial view of English being a universal language, so why learn another language? However, families like the Garcías realize this is their children's ticket to a better life whether here in the US or in their native countries.

As a result of my visits with the Garcías, I would like to get acquainted with all my students' parents, preferably through a home visit, to better understand the home culture, and to make the parents feel more comfortable about approaching the school with questions and concerns. Their visibility will have some effect on how their chil-

dren are treated in the school. Too, I realize that it would be most beneficial if I could improve my Spanish in order to better communicate with those who speak no or little English. I think the effort I make to speak their language shows respect, and they, in turn, might be more comfortable and thus, more willing to try their English with me.

My experience with the Garcías has taught me about how resourceful and industrious people are in spite of limited formal education. We have learned about famous people in this country who have accomplished great things with little formal education. We do not highlight common people who accomplish amazing things in their everyday lives in order to eke out a living. My associations have been with people much like myself, who have had more than a high school education. Therefore, when I listened to the family talk about their means for making a living, I was impressed. Mr. García has a 2nd grade education, and yet, he has taught himself various vocations, and in the process, taught himself how to read and write in Spanish. His jobs have been a truck driver, a mortician, and photographer which has been the mainstay of the family for most of the growing up years of the children. After he turned 40, he

learned about photography through the mail and taught himself and the family members that became, and still is the family business. During my first visit, Mrs. García and Carolina talked warmly about their involvement in the business. "There were weddings, quinceañeras, birthdays, school functions. Sometimes, more than one a day. "We had more work than we could handle. We knew everybody."

They explained that each had a responsibility in taking pictures, developing them (Cristobal and Maria taught themselves), and delivering them. Gerardo and his wife have continued with the business, although more specifically in family and individual portraits.

Mr. García developed a technique called "recina" that he learned from a friend. It involves mounting a photo on a piece of wood that has been carved to accentuate aspects of the photo, giving it a 3-D effect. After mounting, it is "painted" with gesso (what we use in decoupage) that protects it and gives it a shiny finish. He was the only one in Reynosa to do this technique. Since his arrival here in February, he has been building a photography business in the Spanish-speaking community. During my visit in April, he showed me an enlarged wedding photo done with the "recina" technique that he had just finished framing. When I asked Carolina if her dad was doing anymore photography, she told me, "He was getting a lot of business from that same family. Our pastor at our church wants a photo of the youth group taken, also."

Mrs. García displays not only a strong work ethic but also a willingness to work at different kinds of jobs. In addition to Mrs. García's work as a housekeeper, she had worked at a broom factory up until April when a machine mangled her hand. She commented to me during my last visit just before the accident, "It is not hard work. It is not too heavy. There are only three white people and one black person. The rest are Mexican or Central American. Only we are willing to do that kind of work. One young white man cried because the work was too hard and quit!" She noted social levels in the labor force when she explained, "The whites run the machines. Others like me do something with the wood from which the brooms are made."

Mrs. García has some sewing abilities about which I learned during the first visit. She makes little girls' quinceañera dresses like the big girls' dresses. I don't know if it is a talent that she can use to earn some income. Apparently, the seamstress is Aihira who had attended a preparatory school after completing high school (equivalent to our 9th grade) and was studying clothes design. She left to come here six months before she would have graduated. She had made wedding dresses and had done some sewing for the family. Her husband worked as a groundskeeper at a country club. He was learning carpentry also.

María, who lives down the street with her husband and two children, is a homemaker. Her husband Tomás works with the neighbor next to the García's blacktopping driveways. During inclement weather when he can't

work outside, he does carpentry work.

Carolina and Cristóbal contribute to the family income as well. Carolina had been employed at a restaurant in another part of the Hispanic community that is owned by a Mexican family. Now, she is a receptionist at the same place Cristóbal works. She writes the orders and takes the money for the oil and lube jobs. Cristobal does the labor. He had been the sole worker at this location when the owner opened another location in south county which speaks well of Cristóbal. He is recognized as a dependable and smart employee.

In addition to having an aptitude in photography and auto mechanics, Cristobal is very knowledgeable in electronics. Mrs. García laughed as she reminisced about Cristóbal's interest as a young child in how things work. "He would open toys, take them apart but couldn't put back together." He was in an electronics program in preparatory school that he would have completed in another year. He was far advanced for the program here, winning first places in state competitions. He said, "I thought I was going to stay here only a year to study, that's why I want to go back to finish my career (in electronics)." However, he went on to discuss his interest in studying CNC, Computer Numerical Control. The industrial technology teacher at the high school has introduced him to this field.

This family was willing to sacrifice for the sake of their children having more opportunities in life. Mrs. García explained, "We have to work hard. When I arrived the family paid

me \$125.00 a week to take care of one child plus room and board as a housekeeper." Mr. García helped me to understand the difference between the cost of living here and in Reynosa. "With a little bit of money, you can eat, live. For like \$80.00 a week, you can live and have money left over." Cristóbal told me the last day of school that his dad was mowing lawns with a man from the English-speaking Pentacostal Church.

The importance of the church was not clear to me until I got to know the Garcías and more about their involvement in the church. I believe the church is serving not only spiritual needs but also social needs. At various times in the interviews, different members of the family made reference to the difference in their lives here compared to Reynosa. For example, during my first visit, Carolina and her mom discussed those differences. Carolina recalled, "My mom used to cry every night. She wants to go to México." They explained, "You can't walk like there. Or there are buses. Every colonia has a bus. Here, you have to have a car to get anywhere." (As a result, they are buying a car from their pastor). As we sat down to eat one time, Mrs. García started laughing and said something to Carolina. Carolina got up and changed seats with her mom explaining, "She's going to go on a diet so she can get in here." Mrs. García replied, "I used to be thin!" Carolina continued, "We used to eat five times a day and never get fat. We walked, taking the pictures to like seven neighborhoods. Walk to school. Every-

where."

They described how people are out on the streets everywhere in México. They knew everybody also as neighbors or through the photography business. I got the impression they feel isolated here. They know some of their neighbors here, but it is not the same. A convenience store and laundromat are within walking distance. Before they got the car, they had to rely on people to take them different places such as to the grocery store or to church. Apparently, Carolina and Cristóbal introduced the other family members to the Pentacostal Church. I'm not sure how they learned about it. The family did not practice any specific religion in Mexico. Mrs. García was raised as a 7th Day Adventist, however, a grandmother on the father's side was Pentacostal. The church serves as a social network among Mexican and Central American immigrants. Carolina commented, "When I first came (to the church), the Hispanic people all get along, Puerto Ricans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Mexican, Hondurans, Nicaraguans." She talked about when they have holiday celebrations and everyone brings food, they enjoy the different ways each culture prepares similar dishes like empanadas. She noticed that Mexicans use lots of chili peppers. She commented also about the difference in language among all the Spanish speakers.

Cristóbal talked also of his love for the church. "My first year here I didn't have friends. Now I have people in my church as friends. A mixture of Hispanic cultures; It is part of my culture."

We had talked on different

occasions about whether or not they would return to Mexico. When I visited in January, I asked Carolina if there was a possibility they would return to México after she graduated from high school. She replied, "Yes."

I asked, "You don't want to stay?"

Her answer, "I will miss church and friends in the church. There isn't a church like this in Reynosa. And there, I miss my family and friends."

In February, while having lunch with Cristóbal, he informed me that the family had decided to stay. Mr. García had arrived, and they had decided to stay indefinitely. When I asked Cristóbal what he thought about that, he replied, "It is good; more opportunities and I found something better; a very good church."

The church is of central importance in this family's life. When I discussed with them about visiting the school, I asked if they had attended Open House. The reply was, "No, we had church." We could not meet on Saturday mornings because they go to church. I believe people in the church located the job for Mrs. García in the broom factory. Also, a van from the church drove her and several other people to the factory each day. I used to be irritated at the amount of time many of our ESL students spent in church which I had decided took away from their homework time. However, now, I have a better understanding of the role the church plays in the lives of our families. Luis Moll talks about how we need to create reciprocal relations between production (labor-related activities) and learning

(school-related) activities but I would like to add social activities that could enlighten us as well about the cultures of our families.

My Classroom

Cristóbal and Carolina are in two different reading improvement classes. My reading classes consist of a mixture of students who need extra help with reading. I have a lot of our ESL population as they benefit from the instruction and supplemental reading time. Carolina is in English I Sheltered in which all students are Spanish speakers except one who is from Pakistan. We had a problem as the students would talk together in Spanish forgetting (or not caring) that Hina did not speak Spanish. Carolina told me about a time I had a substitute who speaks fluent Spanish who said something to Hina in Spanish and she asked a classmate, "What did he say?" He assumed she spoke Spanish.

My visits with the Garcías helped me with a project I had already decided to do in my English I class. Originally, we were going to explore folklore in different parts of the world, researching in the library and on the internet, in addition to what I would introduce to them. As I learned from the Garcías about the differences in the cultures within the states of México, I decided on using an inquiry approach to studying cultures of students' choices. In addition to using secondary sources the library had to offer, the students would tap primary sources such as interviews with people of that

culture, observations of events, everyday life, use of video/ audiotaping, and photography. The students had the option to work in research teams. Most students chose to study the cultures of different states in Mexico or differences between Mexican and specific Central American cultures. One was interested in the Chicano culture. Another chose the Low Rider culture that has become synonymous with people of Hispanic descent. For a first time project, it went pretty well. The students realized there are some specific differences among cultures but people are here to have a better life. They miss their homelands and families they left there, but

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most will not return to the life of severe poverty they were living.

Final Remarks

I have read and heard about how important it is to get to know the home cultures of our students. I have professed it repeatedly but had never really done it. I was waiting for the parents to come to me, to get involved by coming to school or calling. In other words, I was talking the talk but not walking

the talk. My involvement with the García family has had a profound effect on me.

First, it has made me more proactive, meaning more of a voice for our ESL students. For example, I questioned why there were no ESL students in Gifted and Talented classes? I called the district coordinator to find out how we get ESL students tested for GT. She was thrilled that I called and told me how to get the process started. We tested 39 students. Of those 39, 16 will be evaluated for possible GT placement.

Carolina called my attention to problems with our sheltered content classes. During a visit, she informed me, "I don't like it because everyone is speaking Spanish trying to help one another, speaking Spanish in an English class. It was better when we were in regular classes. There are Hispanic people. The teacher would speak English to you. You would have to speak English to the American students, like in my Geometry class. It is better; we get along better. Some students in the sheltered classes speak English very well." We started the sheltered content instruction program this past school year to serve as a transitional bridge for our ESL students entering mainstream classes. I shared Carolina's objections with my colleagues. As a result, we re-evaluated our placement policy and now limit those classes to Level II students and specific exceptions. All of our students do not come to us with the level of proficiency Carolina had. However, the problem is that some teachers view limited English proficiency as a barrier to advancement. Too

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often I have been told, "He/she doesn't know enough English to make it in my class." I have noticed that when teachers have foreign exchange students with limited English proficiency in their classes, they work with them. Sometimes, our ESL students' limited English proficiency is treated as though they are unable to learn. In my attempt to understand Mrs. García during our visits, I left their home mentally exhausted. How difficult it must be for our students to attend eight classes in which eight different teachers presented their materials using different accents, mannerisms, and styles.

Another way this project has impacted me is to examine how to infuse multicultural education in our school. I met with my principal to discuss what each of us meant by the term "multicultural education." His emphasis was on curricular additions. My emphasis was the need to infuse multicultural education into every aspect of this campus, to change attitudes. I talked to him about the formation of a multicultural education committee that included representation from each sector of our campus. Our committee, numbering approximately twenty-five faculty and students, has had two meetings with a kickoff event planned for the new school year to bring the different cultures in our school together in a fun

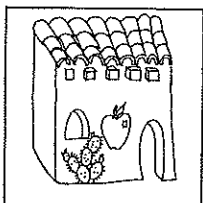
sporting event.

I have learned that we need to actively campaign for our students. They want to be successful. By getting to know Cristobal as I have, I learned of his many talents such as photography and have suggested electives where his talent would be welcomed. I have always known this but why did it take me so long to act? As I evaluate the past years of our ESL program, I realize that our focus has always been staying within the law, scheduling students in the right classes so they can complete their requirements, trying to get them through state-mandated tests, and building and revising curriculum. I too have been caught up in their achievement as a struggle because of language, like "that's the way it is!" I am beginning to ask myself, "Are some of the stipulations required by the state oppressive?" For example, ESL students have to remain in ESL classes until they pass the reading/writing portions of the TAAS. We do not require English speaking students to remain in remedial reading/writing classes until they are successful. I look at sheltered instruction differently in that it is a kind of tracking. Should we be isolating our ESL students from the mainstream? We created these classes because of so many ESL students failing in mainstream classes, not solely because of limited English profi-

ciency but because of insensitive teachers. Sheltered instruction training is nothing more than good teaching, using a variety of instructional techniques and activities to help students with conceptual understanding. Our district coordinator offered three different opportunities for teachers on our campus to get the training of which approximately 25 out of 230 took advantage of it.

I don't know if our school personnel as well as townspeople are cognizant of the changing faces in our school. Teachers of the gifted and honor students see almost exclusively white students. The level classes, being the majority of the type on our campus, are mixed but because of the majority of white students, the cultural minorities are few in each class. Too, the ESL students, almost all of whom are from Mexico and Central America, are isolated from the mainstream with ESL and sheltered instruction classes. It is necessary to prepare personnel for the change in order to deal with it equitably.

As to students' awareness, again, I don't think the majority of white students are aware of the changing population. Over the years, I have heard students comment about our school being separated by color. For example, in the cafeteria in the morning the students are color grouped. Granted, they are sitting with friends, but friends don't seem to cross cultural boundaries. Our students need to be educated. Our campus needs the infusion of multicultural education.



Lophophora williamsii/mescal buttons: Known as the sacred mushroom of the Aztecs, this cactus has been given for nervous disorders, asthma, and rheumatism.

Bridging the Gap Using Funds of Knowledge in the Classroom

by E.K. Keith

Always looking for the late-breaking story on the educational front, Beka Heite-Hiltz, Ace Reporter (AR), interviews middle school teacher Elizabeth Keith (EK) about her involvement in a teacher-action research project that focuses on culture in the classroom.

AR: I understand you are involved in a project to improve your effectiveness in the classroom.

EK: Yes, it's called the Funds of Knowledge Project... FOK.

AR: Funds of knowledge? I'm not familiar with the phrase.

EK: Funds of knowledge is a term borrowed from anthropology that refers to the store of information every person acquires in daily life. For example, knowledge about cooking or fixing a car.

AR: That's very interesting, but you're a teacher...what do funds of knowledge have to do with your classroom?

EK: Everything!

AR: Everything?!? Don't you have to teach to a specific curriculum? Is this one of those newfangled fads that dumps curriculum in favor of some untried, untested new ideas?

EK: Actually, this is not about dumping standard curriculum, rather it's about altering your

perspective. It's a different way of looking at curriculum in order to tailor its presentation to one's particular students. Effective teaching involves building knowledge on what students already know. This project involved figuring out what my students know in order to use that as the starting point for

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building new knowledge. Also, using the FOK in the classroom builds pride in the community and the local culture.

AR: Culture? How does culture figure into the equation?

EK: Culture plays a central role in using FOK in the classroom. The middle school where I teach receives school wide Title I funding, and the student population is about 90% Hispanic. The teacher population is predominantly Anglo, followed by African American, and then Hispanic teachers. So, there is an

economic and racial gap between many teachers and their students. Because so much of each person's knowledge forms through their own cultural experiences, learning some of the FOK possessed by my students altered my point of view. I discovered that my assumptions about my student's knowledge and cultural background differed from the truth. Learning these FOK made me think in terms of presenting important information in a relevant and meaningful way to my students. The FOK bridge the cultural gap in the classroom. AR: You said you learned the FOK. From whom did you learn and how?

EK: I collaborated with other teachers who undertook the same project. As a group, we were trained in some basic methods of anthropological research, like taking field notes and conducting interviews. I learned the FOK from one of my students and her family. The way I learned them was by talking with the family as a learner rather than a teacher. That learning process required an attitude shift from teacher-as-authority to teacher-as-learner. Without such a change in attitude, the project would have been fruitless. Our purpose was to gather information about the family's culture, not to instruct them on how we thought things

should be.

AR: How useful was the collaboration with other teachers?

EK: The collaborative aspect of this project was invaluable. I gained a better perspective on my experience by meeting on a regular basis with other teachers and professors. We discussed our discoveries from the home visits and analyzed the impact of these visits on ourselves and our students. The meetings also provided a forum to exchange ideas about applying the FOK in the classroom.

AR: Give us some information about the family you chose to represent the FOK at your school. Also, why did you choose that student?

EK: The most important reason for choosing Tesora was that I was interested in what makes a student successful as my school, and she is a very strong student. Tesora is a seventh grader. She is the third of six children, all born in the United States. Her parents are permanent residents and have lived in the U.S. for about 18 years. Her mother works for a custodial service, and her father works construction and agriculture jobs in Houston and Mexico, respectively. The family of eight lives in a one-bedroom duplex in an inner city neighborhood. The parents speak Spanish only, and the children are all bilingual.

AR: What did you learn from Tesora's family?

EK: I learned more than I expected, and I expected a lot. I learned the value of talking to parents and learning from them. Before this project, the contact I had with parents was usually to discuss a child's discipline problems. You can see how that would give a person a warped view of parents when you only

talk to the upset, defensive, and frequently angry ones.

Now, I have experienced the value of making positive contact with my students' parents. I intend to make more contacts with parents that are constructive in the future.

As a group, the teachers found that education is highly valued. Tesora's parents and the parents interviewed by others recognized education as key for succeeding in this society.

In terms of their FOK, I found that my student had a great deal of experience that could easily have an application in an academic environment. For example, Tesora's FOK include national and international travel, rural and urban living, and agriculture, among others. AR: It seems you got personally involved with this student and her family. What effect did that have on you and your student in the classroom?

EK: I'm really glad I got personally involved with Tesora's family. Seeing my student in a personal context outside of the classroom and learning about her family strongly influenced my experience. Intellectually knowing that the hordes of students that daily herd in and out of my classroom have families and lives is very different from experiencing a little bit of the family life and home of one student. The visits reminded me that my students really are human beings with personal circumstances that affect them in school.

For Tesora, the big effect on her was that it built up her confidence in her own abilities.

The visits reminded me that my students really are human beings with personal circumstances that affect them in school.

She blossomed academically this year. She gets most of the credit for that. She also tested the limits of her new and unfamiliar relationship with her teacher, like untucking her shirttail, which breaks the school dress code. But, I enforced such school rules for everyone evenly, so this didn't become a problem for us. AR: Can you give a specific example of how you applied your awareness of FOK in your classroom?

EK: The best example of using FOK was my students' participation this year in a national writing contest called Do the Write Thing that offers students a forum to creatively address the problems of violence and alcohol/drug abuse in their neighborhoods. Since all of my students have experience with urban life and the requisite problems, the contest draws on FOK. I broadened the scope of violence as described in the contest to include media and domestic violence. Every student showed interest and participated. And because they wrote, they had something to revise and proof-read. They produced some very good seventh grade writing. Since writing is an integral part of the seventh grade language arts curriculum, I believe it is necessary to give writing opportunities that will engage every student, like this one did.

AR: Are the FOK applicable in subject areas other than language arts?

EK: Once they are known, all it takes for any teacher to use FOK

The greatest value of applying FOK is connecting familiar information with new information.

in her classroom is a little creativity. Sometimes it only requires recognizing that an activity does draw on students' FOK and exploiting that aspect, like I did with the writing

contest. A science teacher might use students' experience with agriculture to teach growth cycles or the chemistry of pesticides. A social studies teacher could easily use students' experience with national and international travel. A math teacher could use the time and distance aspects of travel for calculations. The greatest value of applying FOK is connecting familiar information with new information.

AR: Do you think other teachers

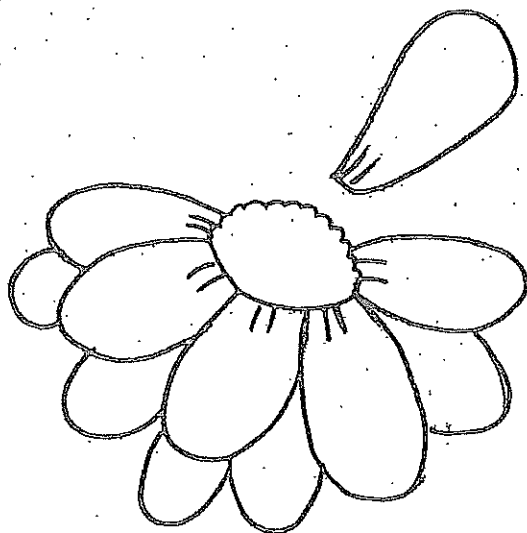
would benefit from discovering the FOK of their own students? EK: Absolutely. The project showed me that my students' cultural knowledge serves as a resource that is at my disposal in the classroom. Cultural differences between teacher and student are not obstacles to be overcome, but rather tools to be understood and used. Learning some of my students' FOK enriched my teaching. As I continue to learn, I expect improved teaching practices will promote my students' success.

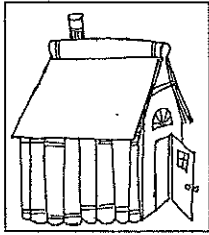
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Digitalis purpurea & D. lanata/foxglove: Discovered recently in the 18th century, the extracted digoxin is prescribed for heart failure and irregular heartbeat.

A New Look at Parent Involvement

by Leslie Patterson & Shelia Baldwin

We used to think that, if we invited parents to school, served food, and explained clearly how they could help us help their children, we would be doing all we could to encourage parent involvement. Too often, the same few parents showed up, and we never heard from the others until there was a problem.

These disappointing experiences with traditional approaches to parent involvement have forced us to acknowledge that sometimes the answer is not simply to provide more information to the people we want to change. We do not see much evidence of a simple linear relation between more facts, on one hand, and changing behavior, on the other hand. Too many other factors intervene—differences in life experiences, current economic situations, media images, personal relationships with faculty, and our own ignorance and our arrogant attitudes. Reality is too complex to predict or control how parents will respond to our best efforts at involving them in the academic lives of their children.

These disappointing and unpredictable results of our efforts to encourage parent involvement have forced us to search for alternative explanations—conceptual models to help us understand and participate in the complex lives of our classrooms and school communities.

As we look for those alternative models, we have discovered that physical scientists—biologists, physicists, and mathematicians—have begun to study what they call complex adaptive systems. Ecosystems, the weather, and some computer programs are all complex adaptive systems. This article will explore the principles underlying those systems to explore whether they are applicable to our work with students and parents.

... traditional approaches to parent involvement have forced us to acknowledge that sometimes the answer is not simply to provide more information to the people we want to change.

What Is A Complex Adaptive System?

Because of recent work in the physical sciences, we see that social systems can be seen as complex adaptive systems (Gell-Mann, 1995). Scientists in many fields are beginning to view phenomena in their fields (chemistry, ecology, meteorol-

ogy, evolution, and computer science, among others) as the work of complex adaptive systems. Complex adaptive systems seem to share a few basic principles: self organization; unpredictability; continual flow and change; interdependence; a critical relation between differentiation and similarity.

Self-organization

In complex adaptive systems, it appears that everything is in disorder, that nothing is predictable or controllable. However, as we “zoom out” and study the system as a whole, we can see order in this chaos—recognizable patterns in the system’s behaviors, and we can see that these behaviors are generally goal-directed, aimed at sustaining the system by adapting to changes in the environment. These goal-directed behaviors seem to happen spontaneously; they are not the result of deliberate decisions. Rituals, routines, and teacher and student roles are a few of the patterns in schools that can indicate self-organization.

Unpredictability

Although we see recurring patterns across complex adaptive systems, the behavior of any one molecule or organism within the

In complex adaptive systems, a change in one part of the system will very likely affect other parts of the system.

system is absolutely unpredictable. A slight change at any point in the life of a system can either cause catastrophic change (sometimes called the Butterfly Effect) or can be negligible. In the same way, a major structural change can ultimately have little or no effect on the behavior of a complex adaptive system. The system responds to its environment in unpredictable and sometimes very surprising ways. In schools we see numerous examples of this principle at work. Greeting a child warmly at the beginning of the day would seem to be a small act, but it is one that can make dramatic differences in the way a child perceives himself and his work, the way his classmates perceive him, and, ultimately, in the ways he responds to instruction all day long. On the other hand, we have all known of curriculum projects that required large investments of time and material resources which made little or no difference in teachers' daily decisions.

Continual Flow and Change

In complex adaptive systems we see a continual flow of energy or information. Think of the weather—wind, clouds, moisture, and temperatures are in constant, interdependent movement. It is this movement itself that leads to the self-organization of a rain storm or a whirlwind or a beautiful spring day. In schools, we can think about the

continual exchange and transformation of information—information relayed through words, pictures, signs, gestures and facial expressions. No one is in control of this continual, interdependent movement of ideas, words, emotions, understandings, and behaviors.

Interdependence

In complex adaptive systems, a change in one part of the system will very likely affect other parts of the system. In a mechanical system, like a car, that is not true. If one part breaks down, the whole machine may not work, but a change in one part of a car will not cause other parts of the

When we recognize these interdependencies, we can make much more thoughtful decisions.

car to change. A human body is clearly a complex adaptive system. A person's emotional state can affect the digestive system. Stress can affect the immune system. Nutrition can affect the whole body in very individualistic and unpredictable ways. In the same way, classrooms and schools are clearly interdependent. A new librarian can affect students' reading habits all over the building. A broken copying machine can cause everyone to have a bad day. When we recognize these interdependencies, we can make much more thoughtful decisions.

Dynamic Interplay Between Differentiation and Similarity

In complex adaptive systems, differentiations—contrasts between and among parts of the system—seem to drive movement and change. In the same way, similarities or patterns across the system can be critical to the stability of the system as a whole. With too much differentiation, the system disintegrates; with too much similarity, the system becomes static and cannot respond to changes in the environment. In school settings, questions and goal statements point to differentiations that can be productive driving forces. Inquiry and conversation can help us focus on these critical differentiations and can help us look for unifying similarities.

Schools as Complex Adaptive Systems

Considering these characteristics of complex adaptive systems, it seems self-evident that schooling is also a complex process, with that complexity playing out at multiple levels within the system. Schools and classrooms exhibit those characteristics in these ways:

- Although 3rd graders may exhibit similar behaviors, behavior and learning are essentially unpredictable among each individual.

- Classrooms and schools are always changing; information and energy is always flowing between and among teachers, students, and parents.

- Teachers, students, and parents are clearly mutually interdependent. Each classroom is a subsystem, interdependent participants in the larger school

system. The community, of which each family is a subsystem is another system. School children are parts of both these classroom systems and the family systems.

•Questioning and goal-setting are clearly examples of differentiation in school systems; the recognition of similarities occurs through metaphor, storytelling, and conversation. This interplay between differentiation and similarity leads to learning.

Complex adaptive systems are often nested within more complex systems. We can think of many subsystems within schools, each of which exhibits the five characteristics of complexity listed above. One way to view these interdependent systems is take a micro/macro perspective, which would lead us to see the following subsystems as relevant to teaching and learning in schools:

- students transacting with their peers
 - a teacher and students working together within one classroom
 - teachers working together as they plan curriculum and instruction
 - campus administrators and teachers making schoolwide decisions
 - district and state policy makers setting mandates and accountability criteria.
- Outside the school, complex systems are also at work:
- *families
 - *neighborhoods
 - *social groups (gangs, churches, clubs, friendships)
 - *ethnic/cultural communities.

It is at the boundaries between and among these subsystems that our parent involvement work must happen.

It is at the boundaries between and among these subsystems that our parent involvement work must happen.

Self-Organization in Schools

From our study of complex adaptive systems in the physical world, we know that change is inevitable. Change is the way a system can adapt to a changing world. Changes in complex systems seem to move toward randomness, stagnation, or toward self-organization. Randomness seems to happen when the new information and energy coming into the system make the participants more and more different from one another. Under these conditions, no system-wide behavior develops. On the other hand, self-organization seems to result when the movement of information and energy into and within the system make it possible for the participants or components in the system to move into various patterns. These patterns (sometimes called self-similarity) resonate through the system, sometimes triggering system-wide behaviors that lead to reorganization of the whole system at higher levels of complexity.

A very simple example of this is when students first walk into class and the teacher is sitting in the rocking chair, beginning to read a story aloud. The story can be so interesting that, as students come in, they begin listening and move close to the teacher. Those who want to hear the story signal to the others to be quiet and listen. In a very few minutes,

everyone in the room can be deeply engaged in listening to the story. The class has self-organized into a "listening system."

When we see this phenomenon, we often say that "the whole is equal to more than the sum of its parts." When we experience it as a participant in a group of learners, we sometimes call it a "shared epiphany" or "synergistic learning." Our goal in such learning is to help groups of learners (whether they are students, teachers, or parents), participate in this kind of complex adaptive system through which information and energy are free to flow in ways that encourage self-organization.

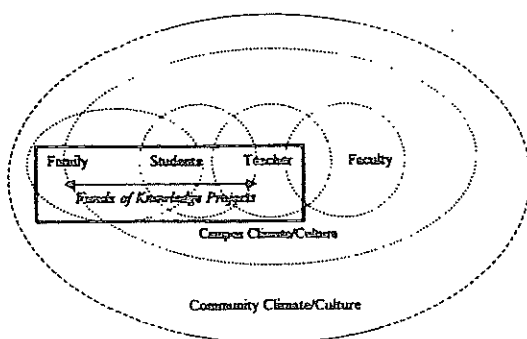
Inquiry and Conversation to Promote Self-Organization

Using what we know about complex adaptive systems, we hypothesize that inquiry and conversation will increase information flow and will encourage adaptive self-organization and new system-wide behaviors. We are confident that these new behaviors will respond to environmental demands, and that these adaptive behaviors will help the system survive and reach its goals. We also assume that this movement will not be steady and that there will be surprises along the way.

From a systems perspective, we can see several subsystems that are critical to systemwide self-organization in schools: students, the individual teacher, the faculty, the campus, parents, and the community. The figure below shows several obvious relations between and among these subsystems. The small arrows indicate the boundaries

across which critical connections can be made. Of course, a complex adaptive system cannot be clearly represented in a static, two-dimensional diagram, so this figure is meant to suggest critical relationships rather than to be an absolute representation. A systems perspective suggests that increasing the information flow within, between, and among these subsystems will enhance the opportunities for transformative feedback, for self organization and for the kind of learning that leads to social action.

Figure 1. Complex adaptive systems and parent involvement through Funds of Knowledge.



Funds of Knowledge Projects Promote Self-Organization

Within this context, we suggest that inquiry and conversation can open the information flow between the school and the home. When teachers become researchers in a Funds of Knowledge project (Gonzales, Moll, Floyd-Tenery, Rivera, Rendon, Gonzales, & Amanti, 1993; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), they go out into the community, into students' homes, and use both inquiry and conversation to learn more about what funds of knowledge are present in that home community that can support school learning. The large arrow in the figure below represents the potential

information flow in Funds of Knowledge projects.

Opening those boundaries between classroom and home communities through a Funds of Knowledge project can result in surprising and rewarding learning for parents, for students, and for teachers. This new learning—this unpredictable self-organization of ideas, knowledge, and ideas—leads to new behaviors for individuals, but it can also lead to self-organization across the whole system. That can mean a dramatic change in the ways

parents and teachers work together. It can mean a growing sense of trust between parents and teachers. It can mean a powerful sense of reassurance and confidence in the future as students see their parents and their teachers

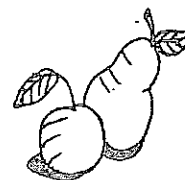
in new relationships. These dramatic system-wide changes will lead to many particular changes in the decisions made by parents, by teachers and by students themselves. Those decisions are totally unpredictable and particular to individuals but can also lead to significant programmatic decisions.

The articles in this volume are filled with those decisions—decisions which were absolutely inconceivable when we began this project. The inquiry and conversations required by a Funds of Knowledge project have led us far beyond our old notions of parent involvement. We now understand that we are not in control of parent involvement; as teachers, we are just one

part of this amazing self-organizing system. We are beginning to understand that it is our role to open the boundaries so that information can flow in all directions through these complex systems we call school and home. We are beginning to understand that, through inquiry and conversation, can invite everyone to participate in these amazing self-organizing systems we call home and school.

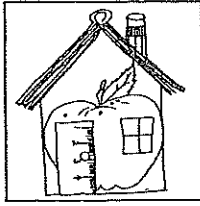
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Cinnamomum zeylanicum/cinnamon: A very desirable spice used around the world, it has been given for reducing muscle tension, relieving gas, stimulating appetite and as an astringent.



From Funds of Knowledge to A Parent Partnership

by Rubén Gonzales

As I reflect on my own personal funds of knowledge there are a few people that have influenced me throughout my life. My grandmother, Eugenia Acosta Gonzales was very influential through her cuentos and the love for reading. Her cuentos would always start with the words, En aquellos tiempos..... She was constantly telling us stories of her childhood and her beloved Papá Mon. She was quick in remembering peoples names and family members. It would always seem that Papá, my grandfather could never remember all the details, so she would end up telling us the story. I enjoyed listening to all the stories from los aquellos tiempos, even if I had heard the story over and over. Even though Eugenia passed away almost two years ago the stories continue to be passed on to others.

Education is a very important aspect to me personally just as it was for her. One of the traits that I continue in my own classroom is the storytelling of my own personal life to my students. These two are intertwined in my daily teaching with my students. It is like if I develop a special bond with them just like a parent would with their own child.

I am going to share one of her many stories that she would tell

us. This story illustrates part of my own funds of knowledge that I have continued in my own teaching career. During the early 1910's the family moved to West Texas. They lived in a one room house that had gaps in the floor. She would tell us that the mice that lived underneath the house became her friends. The mice would stand on their hind legs to accept the food and water

I enjoyed listening to all the stories from los aquellos tiempos, even if I had heard the story over and over. Even though Eugenia passed away almost two years ago the stories continue to be passed on to others.

that she would give them. Eugenia's desire was to learn how to read and write. She would sit down each evening with a lantern and practice reading and writing. She actually learned how to read by reading One Thousand One Arabian Nights. She would read a different story everyday, because it was a different story with a moral ending. She would sit by

the lantern practicing her penmanship by using an old Sears catalog as a model. Eugenia's desire was to be a teacher, so she would sit her brothers and sisters around in a circle as she would conduct class. She taught them math, reading, and writing.

Eugenia never forgot where she came from, because the rest of life was devoted towards education. She learned how to read and write English, so she would serve as an interpreter for many people. She taught many people how to read and write in Spanish.

My grandmother had a great influence on my father, Abelardo Gonzales on the importance of reading. He was always reading the Odessa American, which is the daily newspaper from Odessa, Texas. We were never allowed to touch the newspaper until he finished. When my father was not working or watching television he would be reading. Even today he continues to read different types of literature. I remember that our house had books for us to read all the time. My mother would take Sylvia, my sister, and I to the Public Library to check out books during the summer. I would even read the encyclopedia, when I would not have anything to read.

Religion is very important in my family. We would always go to the 8:00 Mass at Saint Agnes Catholic Church. As a child, I always wanted to be a priest. Jimmy Primera and I had the opportunity to attend a Vocations Workshop in Liberty, Missouri at the end of my seventh grade year.

I went again in 1977 with Sam Sarabia at the end of my sophomore year in high school. That summer my family and I went to Missouri to go visit Precious Blood Seminary. We were eating lunch outside Wichita, Kansas when the news came out that Elvis Presley had died. With my family's blessings, I left home in August 1977 for Precious Blood Seminary for my last two years of High School.

I went to Donnelly College my first year of college. I transferred to Rockhurst College in Kansas City, Missouri. Rockhurst is run by the Jesuits priests. In the Spring of 1983, I decided that I would leave the seminary. I wanted to work and decide as to what I wanted to do with my life. That Spring, I also graduated with a BA in Communications.

As I look back to those years, I can honestly say that I had a great time even though school at that time was very difficult for me. I just had to study harder.

I moved to Houston in 1983. I worked in management jobs. In 1990, I applied to the Alternative Certification Program (ACP). I started out as a long-term substitute position at Cage Elementary. I have been there all of my teaching career.

I currently am working on a Masters degree in Educational Administration at the University of Houston. I am very involved in the daily activities of school

life. I am presently the Cubmaster for the pack at school. I also serve as Commissioner, Roundtable leader, and Scout leader Trainer for the Sam Houston Area Council Boys Scouts of America. I am also part of the Shared Decision Making Committee (SDMC). I am also part of various committees around school.

The School

Rufus Cage was founded in 1903 as a two-room schoolhouse in the rural surroundings in east Houston. As the east area grew into an inner city it welcomed Jews, Italians, Mexican and Central American immigrants (Amstutz, 1997). In 1910 a new schoolhouse was dedicated on Telephone Rd. The present Cage is located on Telephone and Ernestine. This building was opened in 1983.

For the school year 1996-1997 there were 778 students enrolled at Cage. Ninety-five percent of the students are Hispanic. The enrollment of White and Afro-American students is at two percent each. One percent of our students are Asian (Amstutz, 1997). All of the students receive Title One services, since it is a campus-wide program. Ninety-four percent of the students are on Free/Reduced Lunch program. Fifty-two percent of the students are in Bilingual/ESL programs. Seven percent of the students receive services under the Special Education program.

In the school year 1996-1997 the school was divided into three vertical teams and a Pre-K-

All of the students receive Title One services, since it is a campus-wide program. Ninety-four percent of the students are on Free/Reduced Lunch program. Fifty-two percent of the students are in Bilingual/ESL programs.

Kindergarten team, which is the concept of schools within schools. The teams divided so that the students from the same family are in the same vertical team from First to Fifth grade.

Each of the vertical teams are responsible for a school wide event. Arcoiris is responsible to put together the Math Olympics. Solaris is in charge of Spelling Bee and Bilingual Bee. One of their teachers also does the Scroggins Literature Contest. Grand Caravan puts together the Science Fair for all students. One of the teachers is also in charge of the Post Office system for the team.

Beginning the school year 1997-1998 there will be only three vertical teams from Pre-Kindergarten-Fifth grade. The faculty and staff voted so that Cage would be a Charter school next school year, but this is pending school board approval.

The PUMA program is a field-based training for student teachers from the University of Houston. They are paired with master teachers to guide them through the student teaching semester. This gives them the chance to put into practice what they learned in their classes with the students. The teacher and student teacher spend many hours collaborating on lessons that will be presented during the week. It gives the teacher a chance to work with small group instructions.

Sharing the campus with Cage is the Middle school component

called Project Chrysalis. They are a charter school with extended school hours. They do their academics in the morning and go out in the afternoons to work on service projects around the Houston area. They travel on the Metro buses to get them to their destinations. They have service projects with Project Row Houses, Museum of Fine Arts, and Ripley House. Some of the students also go to the Houston Chronicle and work the staff. They have also had the opportunity to go out on major field trips to Washington, DC, the Ozarks in Missouri and to Sea Camp in Galveston. The majority of the teachers in Project Chrysalis are with Teach for America program.

Special Education

Students who are having difficulty in mastering objectives go to the Pass Center to receive individualized instruction by the teachers in the Center. The teacher does either individual or group teaching with students. The students who are labeled for Special Education programs go to the Pass Center to receive their services. The Pass Center teachers also provide teacher support by recording stories, STAR testing, Accelerated Reading program, and doing modifications for students. The center also provides highlighted textbooks to those students who are in need of them.

Elisa provides support to the classroom teachers by using inclusion strategies. She consults with teachers who have students with behavior problems. A couple of years ago, she helped me with one of my reading groups, so that I could work with Jesse one to one. I was able to spend time with my own reading

group as well as Jesse. He came into the classroom unable to read either in Spanish or English. He left the classroom reading Spanish and English, which was the proudest moments in my teaching career.

The Pre-School Program for Child with Disabilities (PPCD) serves our four year old students with special needs. Two aides assist the teacher with these students. Anthony is the bilin-

The community around the school consists mainly of older homes and apartments.

gual self-contained special education teacher. The model for inclusion and mainstream are used with some of the students. The students receive instruction according to their needs. Speech is another service that is provided to the students.

After School Activities

There are a variety of programs that a student can join in after School activities. The Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts are active on campus by being the patrols. The Drill Team performs for special functions on campus as well participating in parades. The YMCA Teen Court recently won 1st place in their own division. The students who go through the Teen Court program provide community services after school on campus.

Parent Services

A few years back the school decided to hire a Social Worker, so that the focus could be on the family. The Social Worker is constantly helping the families

and connecting them with social services that are needed. She has some Social Worker interns from the University of Houston who assist her in the variety tasks. They do individual and group counseling with students as well as lessons for classrooms.

The Houston Independent School District recently established the Parent Reconnect Center with a Parent Educator. The Armandina Soto Parent Center was recently dedicated for the parents of our students. The parent educator's responsibility is to set up classes, whether it be parenting, ESL, sewing, aerobics or computer.

The Community

The community around the school consists mainly of older homes and apartments. There are many homes in the area in dire need of repair. Many of the children from the neighborhood join the baseball little league in the Springtime. The area lacks an entertainment center like a bowling alley, movies or recreation center. Cage has a Spark Park in which the neighborhood is allowed to use after school hours.

The López Family

There were several reason as to why I chose to work with the López family for this study. Maria is Juan's aunt. About four years ago, Maria was in my third grade classroom. She is in Project Chrysalis, so her mother remains active in school. Juan was in my classroom this past year. I have known the mothers of these two students for some time. I met José, Juan's father, at one of the parent meetings that we had during the year. I was also interested in this family, because Juan has been involved in the Cub Scouting program at

Cage for the past three years.

There are some things that I found while working with the López family. First of all Education plays in important part of their lives. Second, providing a nurturing environment for Juan and Lisa. Third, a spirit of adventure by moving to the United States from El Salvador and setting up a business.

When Rachel was ten years old, she urged her parents to move to the United States to go to school. Manuel and Rosa moved the family to Los Angeles around 1980. His family was living in the Los Angeles area, so it made sense to move to California. Rachel and Elena grew tired of living in Los Angeles, so they moved back to live with their grandmother in El Salvador. They went to school in El Salvador. Rachel graduated in 1987 from a high school in El Salvador.

Rachel and her mother bring the kids to school everyday and they talk with them. Juan and Lisa's job are to study hard to learn, so that they will be able to get things in the future. This is evident through an entire rack of Walt Disney tapes that they have in the front room of the apartment. The children watch these videos all the time. They watch the Discovery Channel and Nickelodeon. Juan gets up early during the weekend to watch cartoons. Juan and Lisa do not watch regular TV programs. Since they are in bed by 8:30 they listen to cassettes by Enrique and Ana, who sing children's songs.

Rachel is the one that helps them with their homework. She even studies the Math book, so that she can help Juan with the homework. She makes certain

that Juan maintains his Spanish reading. He is already reading in English and is doing rather well. He is ready to take two or three Accelerated Readers test a day, so he is reading quite a bit. The family speaks Spanish at home, even though the parents do speak some English. Juan does not try to show Lisa either to speak or read in English.

Rachel attended all of the parent meetings. Juan and Lisa were involved in the after school aerobics. Juan also attended the Art Club. Juan was a Bear in Cub Scouts. Rachel volunteered to be a Brownie Scout leader when a Girl Scout Troop was started in the Spring. She and her mother attended the adult aerobics on campus. José did attend school for the first time in January a Parent TAAS meeting. José works for a car repair shop where he does state inspections and emission testing. He took a course in order to be certified.

José and Rachel want to provide a nurturing environment for Juan and Lisa. The weekend gives them the opportunity to be together to do things. They enjoy going to San Jacinto or Texas City to go crabbing. Rachel will then come cook the crabs for the family to enjoy. They also go out as a family to the movies. Juan enjoys riding his bicycle, so he and his grandfather take long bicycle rides. Juan also enjoys playing basketball with Andrew. There was a debate as to whether or not Juan would get a Nintendo 64, because of his conduct at school.

They expressed a concern for the violence out in the neighborhood. They want to make sure that Juan and Lisa are aware of the situations, so that they will not get involved in either gangs,

or drugs. Rachel told me that a friend in the classroom is a different friend out in the neighborhood. The only true and sincere friend is in your heart.

Finally, there is a sense of adventure in them that yearns to be successful in their endeavors. They simply uprooted the family and moved to Los Angeles. Rachel and her sister went back to El Salvador, but Maria and her brother stayed with the parents. During this time Manuel worked in a body and paint shop while Rosa worked making jewelry.

After awhile Manuel and Rosa owned a t-shirt store. Things went well for them for awhile, but then they lost the business. Elena and her husband recently opened their own small business selling corn in front of a grocery store. It is within the same spirit of entrepreneurship as Manuel's. Rachel feels that she would not want to be confined to a business, but feels satisfied when she takes cars back to El Salvador or Guatemala and sells them. It gives her the feeling of accomplishment. She commented that it was not the money, but rather pride. A couple years ago, she lost her purse with money and passport and had to stay there for a couple of months until she got a new passport.

Manuel moved his family to Houston in 1986, because it is closer to El Salvador. José and Rachel still travel to El Salvador, since his family still lives there. They are planning on driving a car to El Salvador this summer to sell it and spend sometime with José's family.

The Classroom

I talked to Rachel, Juan's mother, every morning about his progress or conduct, because she and Rosa, her mother, would be

at school for breakfast everyday. Juan is an excellent student and is a leader in his own way. He understands the concepts, so he always is the first to complete his work. Juan was having problems with his conduct in the classroom, so we were working together to solve the problem. She was very concerned with the situation, so she would do things with him at home to deter this type of behavior at school. Juan is full of energy, so he tends to wonder around the room talking to others, playing around or disturbing the other students while I would be teaching. We started working with a solution from the beginning of the school year until the end.

Things started to get sticky shortly after starting to work with them on this project. Juan got in trouble and was sent to the Assistant Principal for his behavior in the classroom. He was referred to the YMCA Teen Court. His parents were there during the trial and he received ten hours of community service. This was a tense time, because she wanted for José to understand as to what she goes through everyday with Juan. It also a good time to point out that he went to sixth grade in El Salvador, which is a completely different educational system from the United States. He attended the Parent TAAS night in January, which was the first time that he had been to Juan's school. He does value school and wants the best for Juan and his sister.

Juan and José joined other Cub Scouts in a District event and camping weekend. This was the first time that Juan and his father would spend some quality time together. It started to rain during

I was grateful for Rachel's help during the school year in working with me to improve Juan's behavior.

the day events, so the Scouts went with their fathers to the scheduled events. José and other parent cooked the lunch, which he commented that he was having a good time. At the end of the day, I noticed him driving up towards me with Juan. He told me that he was going home, because he didn't like the way that Juan was disciplined by another Scout leader. He didn't feel that anyone had a right to discipline his son. I went and talked to the Scout leader and found out that Juan was in an area that was prohibited for all Scouts. I explained the situation to Rachel and she was in agreement that José needs to learn how to discipline Juan. He needed to look at the situation before jumping into conclusions.

There was an improvement on Juan's behavior shortly after he completed his community hours. He was calmer than before and would follow my instructions. I would make sure that he did tasks that would involve movement for him. Mr. Walter Flores, the student teacher, would divide sheets into quarters in which Juan would have to complete a section at a time. At the end, he would go to the desk to put the pieces together. We controlled his movements, and he would not get frustrated in having to stay in his seat. He would be sent out on errands, so that he could get some exercise. Slowly his conduct started to improve in the classroom. He was on tasks the majority of the time. All during this time Rachel, Mr. Flores and

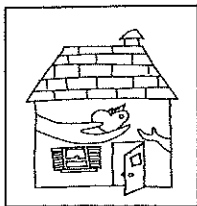
I were working together on Juan's conduct. I knew that we would need to work with the Rachel, because she handled the discipline at home. I knew that he would be punished and lose privileges at home.

Everything was going well with Juan until the week before school ended. He got mad with a student and bit him on the arm. I took them to the office and Juan got suspended for two days. It seemed what we had been working towards all year seemed to fall apart. Juan had to realize that a bit is a severe infraction, whether it is done on the first or last days of school. Rachel realized that what Juan did was wrong in the first place, but it was difficult to understand the severity of the punishment right before school was to end.

I was grateful for Rachel's help during the school year in working with me to improve Juan's behavior. Sometimes it is difficult knowing that we were working together in this project to keep it from being a distortion of the results. She has been very supportive of me in working with Juan during the school year. It seemed that I was able to lean on her when I would need to get things done for the classroom, or for the Scouts.

Conclusions

I enjoyed doing this study with the López family. I got to know more about them during this short period of time. They had wonderful stories to share with me. They opened their home and hearts to me in order to do this project. We all have our own stories to tell, but need someone to take the time to share them with.



Rosa canina/dog rose: The hips of the dog rose are one of the richest sources of Vitamin C and are given for colds, mild diarrhea and stomach upsets. The rose petals are used in water to soothe the skin.

A Full Circle of Understanding: Immersion Into Your Student's Environment, Departure From Your Own by Jennifer Lauren Jones

I quoted a line from Robert Frost in my high school yearbook which describes my life so far and sets a course for the days to come. I have the quote etched in my memory, possibly not as Robert intended it to be communicated, nevertheless I quote it now from my mental tablet, "somewhere ages and ages hence I shall be telling this with a sigh, two roads diverged in a yellow wood and I, I took the one less traveled by and that has made all the difference. . . ."

Born fourth of four girls during a Connecticut winter, I was a precocious child who sang to the Beatles and danced the hustle. My family arrived in Connecticut before I was born and have never left it. Having never moved as a child, I grew to believe I could do anything and explore anywhere simply because I always had somewhere to go home to. Confidence, extroversion, and curiosity were traits I developed early on, attributes that contribute to my never-ending pursuit of seemingly unconnected auxiliary skills such as trombone, knitting, or salsa dancing. While I no longer play the trombone, I can knit mittens, and I used to hold my own in Latin dance circles.

My family, as I like to say, are a bunch of gringos puros (purely American people), but I speak Spanish well. My language

proficiency is the result of my desire to avoid seventh-grade reading class and my mother's pressure to learn a 'useful' language. Throughout seventh, eighth, and ninth grade I endured Spanish in order to meet the aforementioned requirements. Somehow endurance turned into self-motivation and interest in learning about and seeing more of the Hispanic culture.

The summer after my junior year in high school I headed to Bucaramanga, Colombia as an AFS exchange student. I love Colombia for its people and its literary qualities; Colombia pulses with rhythm and flavor. Colombia led to Spain, Spain and my Mount Holyoke College experience propelled me into a summer internship with the U. S. Department of State's American Consulate in Panama City, Panama. My experiences in Panama were quite thrilling: being tear-gassed with then-President Bush, visiting the city morgue, as well as writing a report on female U.S. citizen prisoners in local jails. I left Mount Holyoke with a degree in International Relations and a degree in Spanish Literature: I especially love the work of Isabel Allende.

Riding on planes between U.S. and foreign destinations became my post-college reading time.

During my first three years out of

college, I worked for a small, international management consulting firm based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. My consultant position required me to travel to places such as Houston, London, and La Paz. Bolivia was one of my favorite assignments. I spent three months traveling around the country, studying the informal or unregistered business sector of the economy. Prior to and after my Bolivian experiences, I spent time analyzing trends in industries ranging from artificial graphite to infant formula. During the infant formula case I began to think about my future, particularly the contribution I was making to the common good of society.

After much thought, I decided I should be spending less time in the office or on airplanes, and spending more time trying to improve the lives of those less fortunate than I. My goals clarification exercise led me to join Teach for America because I believe in their vision of an equitable education for every child.

The rest of my autobiography remains unwritten, in the interim I am at Cage Elementary on Houston's east side. I am in Room 133, the bilingual classroom where the teacher sometimes learns more than the students.

Cage Elementary and the Surrounding Community

Houston's East End, where Cage is located, is a vibrant community of Hispanic immigrants. The area used to be one of high transition, which meant a large number of students entering and leaving schools during the academic year. Recently the neighborhood has become more stable, resulting in student mobility figures below 20% annually at Cage. The community's large immigrant population frequently use English and other native languages, at Cage more than half the students are classified as LEP or Limited English Proficient. LEP classification means the school community must work harder to ensure content mastery, despite language barriers. Many East End residents struggle financially; 96% of Cage's students receive free or reduced lunch. The combined language and financial pressures experienced by Cage students causes almost 60% of our students to classify as at-risk for academic failure. Despite the struggle our community encounters, the parents, teachers, and students at Cage come together to make our school a place for everyone to grow and learn.

My Funds of Knowledge Family

Delores (not her real name) is the second of three children. Delores' mother (age 28) stays home with the children, while her father (age 32) works as a welder. Delores' mother completed the ninth grade in Mexico and her father the fifth. The only daughter, Delores has an older brother in the fifth grade and a younger brother in morning Pre-Kindergarten.

The family emigrated from rural Mexico during the summer of 1996. They followed other relatives who live in Houston and Dallas. They currently reside near the school in a three room house adjacent to a small apartment complex which houses recent immigrant families.

The family emigrated from rural Mexico during the summer of 1996. They followed other relatives who live in Houston and Dallas. They currently reside near the school in a three room house adjacent to a small apartment complex which houses recent immigrant families. Their house, built in the mid-forties, has a stove, oven, sink and bathroom, but no heat or air conditioning. Boards and silver electrical tape cover the home's broken windows, despite repairs, the wind and cold sneak into the house.

The family spends most of their free time together, playing games, singing, reading or just talking. Delores' parents incorporate the children in the family decisions, from what to purchase at the grocery to where to live.

The family believes children should be heard and spoken to, Delores' mother believes children need active support and guidance from a parent, but they should be allowed to make their own decisions.

The family values harmony and the children are punished, usually by time spent sitting on the bed, if they express anger toward another family member.

The family is Roman Catholic, they believe religion teaches respect and honesty and promotes hard work, the parents work to impart those ideals to their children. They also believe the church promotes peace and

understanding, fundamental tenets of their lives.

Delores' mother attributes her emphasis on child development, religion, and family harmony to her own past experiences. Delores' maternal grandmother divorced her spouse and left Delores' mother to care for her six younger siblings. Responsibilities included cleaning, shopping and cooking for the family. At fifteen, Delores' mother married to get out of the house and "go to dances." At sixteen, her first child was born and she decided to dedicate her life to ensuring opportunities existed for her children to play and grow with few domestic responsibilities to impede their development.

Description of Classroom

My small classroom at the end of the hallway is designed to accommodate the learning needs of my seventeen active, bilingual second-graders. The classroom setup is designed to foster a cooperative learning environment, therefore have learning centers and students are seated in groups. My students all sit at tables with at least one other student for the following reasons:

- Students learn from each other in a cooperative environment
- Group seating lends itself to small-group activities which contribute to efforts to create a

- sense of community within the classroom
- Students have opportunities to accept leadership positions and develop leadership skills during group work
- Group setup is easy for teacher facilitation (students more closely monitor each others' activity)
- Student tables are located in front of the main chalkboard in order to create an easy viewing environment for all students.

Due to the small size of the classroom and my efforts to make my classroom student, not teacher-centered, I gave away my teacher desk and now locate my belongings at the end of a kidney-shaped table in the back of the classroom. Seating myself at the back of the room enables me to observe students in all areas of the classroom and provides me with a quiet place to hold individual meetings (when other students are seated at their tables).

Visiting Delores and her family provided me with a new basis of information upon which to build a rapport with my students and improve my instructional strategies. After visiting, I realized my attributions regarding her financial status were wrong. Although classroom observation revealed Delores to be bright and well adjusted, leading me to believe she lived in a comfortable economic status; Delores' home revealed a family struggling to make ends meet. After visiting, I began to look for the signs of poverty I previously missed,

Visiting Delores and her family provided me with a new basis of information upon which to build a rapport with my students and improve my instructional strategies.

such as wearing poorly sized uniforms, inappropriate dress for the weather, and strict reliance on the free meals program for all food (never brings snack). Now, I think harder when asked to recommend students for free clothing vouchers, or other economic-based programs at the school.

Observing dialogues and interactions between Delores and her mother also motivated me to make an effort to speak daily to students who might not be interacting with adults in the home. Seeing how much care, love and attention surrounded Delores at her home, I also realized I have an obligation as a teacher, to the best of my ability, to duplicate that environment in the classroom. Currently I work much harder to express individual value to each of my students and to see them as little people who are growing when they make me angry.

Delores' mother and I also spoke at length about the safety of the neighborhood, particularly her concerns about letting the children go outside to play, something I took for granted all children did. Seeing how students' neighborhood environments frequently confined them to the indoors, I began to schedule daily recess time during which students play freely on our

safe, outdoor playgrounds. Subsequent to my visits, I place more emphasis on educating the whole child, instead of focusing on cognitive skills alone.

Final Remarks

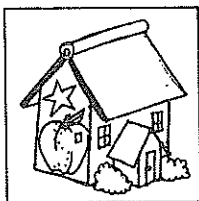
Participation in the Funds of Knowledge project has helped me build a knowledge base about the students I teach and a comfort with the knowledge acquisition process. Prior to participating in the project, I possessed many false attributions about my students based on my personal experience. Now I recognize the need to explore, understand, and utilize the experiences of others when analyzing a situation. I recommend all teachers get to know the family of at least one student in their classroom because full understanding comes from immersion into the student's environment (the home) and departure from your environment (the classroom).

Observing dialogues and interactions between Delores and her mother also motivated me to make an effort to speak daily to students who might not be interacting with adults in the home.





Mentha x piperita/peppermint; The most widely used herbal remedy, it used to calm digestive problems, colic, and to suppress nausea and vomiting.



Funds of Knowledge That Diminish Borders and Create New Dimensions

by Deb Shafto

My life in some ways relates to the lives of the family I visited. I came to my education and teaching rather late in life, as I was, for years, a single parent and was preoccupied with supporting my son and myself. There were few options for me and I took what work would earn enough money. When my son went to college, I began to work with emotionally disturbed adolescents and for two years I operated a group home for seven of them. With my second marriage, I had enough support to get my BA at the age of 54. Through community involvement in my neighborhood school, I became interested in teaching. I earned my MA Ed this year and I teach bilingual kindergarten at Cornelius Elementary School. I hope and had hoped to provide the space and the learning experiences to allow my children to grow into self governing, creative adults. I want them to have options and to make choices that will yield for them satisfying and productive lives. This is my first year of teaching.

Cornelius is located in the south central school district and serves a community of working class people. Although only 2 of the 7 kinders are bilingual, the population is nearly half of Hispanic descent. Almost half

are Black, and a small minority are Caucasian and Oriental. The school was designated as an exemplary school according to standards of both the State of Texas Education Agency and HISD. This means that within the school there is a great emphasis on the TAAS test, and within the community there is great respect

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for the school administrators. Many of the parents go out of their way and resort to devious tactics to keep their children in this school. At the beginning of the year I established what I thought were the proper routines for kindergartners and had a hostile confrontation with some of the parents who wanted their children to learn the academics. My plans for group control of behavior and community handling of problems were met with demands to "castigarlos, castigarlos."

The Funds of Knowledge

Project began to affect my thinking and the dynamics in my class when I started to look at the children more closely to choose the right one to visit. The first parent I approached with the request for an interview was the mother of a child who had been born in Mexico. She thought about our program and decided she could not risk the interview because she does not live within the district for this school, although she gave the school an address that is within the district, she does not live there. She transports her daughter to and from school everyday because she likes the school, and it is convenient for her because she works in the area. She was hesitant to answer questions about Maria's father, and her reluctance led me to believe that she is not married to him. Both of these factors have made her feel very vulnerable, and unwilling to have her demographic information included in the study, even under an assumed name.

The second parent I approached lives nearby, but not at the address given to the school. She agreed to do the interview, and I agreed not to divulge her correct address to the school. Mrs. Martinez is one of about 12 parents who escort their children to the classroom in the mornings. These parents often arrive early

and visit with each other while waiting for the bell to ring, and it was from their interactions that I came to understand that my request for an in-home interview was an honor for her and added to her prestige in the group. Other mothers asked if I would be doing more than one family and said they would like to be next if more visits were planned. Graciela, the student whose home I had arranged to visit, clucked and crowed all day. Several of the children asked me to visit their homes as well. I arranged the visit for a Sunday morning and the Friday prior, Graciela reminded me loudly several times that this was the weekend.

The Visit

Graciela and her family live in a subdivision off Telephone Road to the North and west of Hobby Airport. Although there are some exceptions, most of the houses are small, two bedroom homes of about 1000 to 1500 square feet. They are owned or occupied by successful blue collar workers, foremen, supervisors, welders and are nearly all of Hispanic descent. Nearly all of the houses are of the same design and all are set back from the curb about 20 feet. The neighborhood is clean and well groomed and many of the houses sport flowers and owner generated landscaping. Graciela's house has only one small tree in the back yard and that does not shield the house from the hot Texas sun. The grass is dense and green and obviously cared for. There is not a bald or thinning spot and not a single blade pokes its head above the others. The house is a single story wooden frame single family dwelling with a single car

When I asked Mrs. Martinez about her life, she told me that she basically cleaned house, cooked, and looked after the children and their clothes.

attached garage. It has two bedrooms separated by a bathroom. The front room, facing the street belongs to the parents. It holds a queen size bed, a dresser, a chest, a night table, a door to a small closet and a small shrine to the Virgin. The shrine is composed of a small wall shelf, draped with a coarse lace on which sit two candles and some silk flowers. Above the shelf hangs a framed picture of the Virgin. The picture is not painted, but rather made of an impressed plastic so that it appears to be three dimensional. Mrs. Martinez does not turn her back to the Virgin, but positions herself so that the conversation includes the icon. My impression was that the image is very real to the woman. Mrs. Martinez describes herself as religious person who goes to church regularly and frequently prays for guidance in raising her children. She does not believe in corporal punishment and talks with her children when they have misbehaved.

Both of her daughters are "bien educadas" and have no problems in school. In the back bedroom that they share are a single bed for Graciela, the youngest and a double bed occupied by the older girl, a fifth grader. A straw cross is attached to each bed at the head and a medal, which I now recognize as the principal's award hangs in the room, alongside Graciela's bed. The first thing I noticed about the house was the cleanliness of it. Every

nook and corner was clean and my impression was that it stayed that way most of the time.

Mrs. Martinez is a small, moderately plump woman. Her fifth grader, Sandra is nearly as tall as she. She and her husband were both raised in a small Mexican town toward, but not on the Pacific coast. She has been in the U.S. about 15 years but speaks little English yet. She is enrolled this year in an after school class to learn. Her husband, a carpenter and a foreman at his construction job, does speak English well, but with an accent. Sandra has learned English from the school and from her playmates and speaks without accent. Graciela has learned much this year, but it is still Sandra who speaks for the mother and interprets when necessary.

Mrs. Martinez

Mrs. Martinez' life is restricted by what appears are the demands of her husband and her culture. Her husband does not want her to work, and her culture dictates what she does with the hours of her days.

When I asked Mrs. Martinez about her life, she told me that she basically cleaned house, cooked, and looked after the children and their clothes. She shops for incidentals by herself or with her children, but her husband accompanies her on her weekly shopping trips. She has acquaintances among the parents

of the children in classes with her's, but they do not visit each other's homes, they spend little time with each other except while waiting to pick-up or drop off their children. Mrs. Martinez talks to Mrs. Perez by phone for 10 to fifteen minutes a day, but they do not kaffe-klatch, they do not visit each other's homes although they live nearly across the street from each other. They do not have community projects or programs of their own into which they can invest their time and creativity.

On a typical day, Mrs. Martinez rises at 6:00 AM, makes lunches for her family, cooks breakfast, awakens her husband and gets him off to work. She then awakens the girls, does their hair, gets them ready for school and walks them to their classrooms. She returns to her home where she performs some other household chores and returns to school at 9:30 with Graciela's lunch. She completes her housework and begins preparation for the evening meal. She picks up her children from school, oversees their homework and when it is done, she accompanies them to the neighborhood park for a short time. On her return, she finishes preparing the evening meal, has dinner with her family and cleans up afterward. She gets the children ready for bed, and for a short time, if allowed, they watch TV for an hour before the children turn in. After they are in bed, she watches the serial stories on Spanish TV.

There are certain other family matters for which she is also responsible. Mr. Martinez' brother had eaten some bad shellfish and was in serious condition in the hospital. It fell to

Mrs. Martinez to sit with him all day, every day until he left the hospital. I had known from an intellectual standpoint what some of the effects of oppression are, but I never saw them so clearly, particularly in people I know so well. To me her life seems like an endless string of house cleaning and meal making. Her only goals are involved with the lives of her children. They are both bright and she wants them to go to college, perhaps for a

Although one can see some generational movement in that Mrs. Martinez can read, although not well, and both girls will learn to be proficient classroom readers, the literacy tradition in the family still primarily oral.

business degree and perhaps to learn computers. She never asked them what they thought they would like to do.

Graciela

From my observations, Graciela is destined to live a life with nearly as few options as had her mother. Mrs. Martinez whole family, mother, father, sisters and brothers have come from Mexico and live in the greater Houston area. Mrs. Martinez talks to her mother every day on the phone and considers her mother to be her best friend. They talk about the family doings and Mrs. Martinez frequently asks her mother for advice, particularly about child-rearing matters, as she considers her mother to be a good mother,

and wise in the ways of children. Sandra and Graciela feel the same way about their mother. They both said during my interview that they want to be like her.

Neither Mrs. Martinez' mother nor her mother-in-law ever went to school and neither can read or write. Although one can see some generational movement in that Mrs. Martinez can read, although not well, and both girls will learn to be proficient classroom readers, the literacy tradition in the family is still primarily oral.

Although Graciela will be one of the first in my class to become a reader, because of the family's tradition of not reading, I seriously doubt that she will ever read for recreation. I saw no magazines or newspapers except for the TV guide. When I asked if the girls had books I was assured that they had many and was shown a group of about five Little Golden/Disney type books that sat on a rack in the dining area. There were no newspapers, no novels, no magazines, and no real books to be seen. There were no books on the night tables. School books were kept in the girls' book bags when homework was finished. The living room features the television. The sofa and two soft chairs face it and there is no lighting for reading. The coffee table that sits in front of the couch and one of the chairs is clean except for the TV Guide. Unless Graciela becomes an avid reader, and allows books to widen her horizons, or unless some dramatic event intervenes, she could run the risk of growing into her mother's life as a non-reader despite her reading proficiency.

Mr. Martinez

Although Mr. Martinez is absent from the home much of the time, the life of the family still centers around him. It was clear to me that when he is home, all attention is focused on him. My visiting at such a time seemed to be out of the question. I asked if there might be a time when I could come to visit when the whole family might be together and was told that no, he works late every day, 6 days a week with non-optional overtime every day. On Sundays, he plays softball with his friends, and is gone until it is too dark to play. He came to the open school, but that was early in September and I was unable to spend any time with him. Later, I met him with the family in the supermarket but I have not had any lengthy discussion with him. It is he, however, that dictates when and for how long the children may watch the television. Meals are geared to the times when he will be home, and his caps hang on the living room wall near the door. No other person possessions were found in any of the rooms, save Sandra's medal which hangs in her room. He signs the report cards and permission slips for absences and field trips. Mrs. Martinez has told me on other occasions, that she must get her husband's approval before she could agree to accompany the class on its outings.

Mrs. Martinez offered me food and a large bottle of juice and I started to decline it when I noticed that her face was both anxious and disturbed. I surmised that I would be trespassing

The first was that all of the children and their lives stood out for me as if in a new dimension.

the norms and perhaps insulting her by declining to eat and drink in her home. I explained that I needed to return home, as I had been there much longer than either of us had anticipated, and I added, untruthfully, that my husband would be waiting for me. I sensed, and I believe I was right, that the waiting husband superseded all other polite conventions. We talked for a few more minutes and she apologized for the smallness of her house, and I admired it for its appearance and cleanliness. I think she was finally satisfied.

The Impact of my Visit on My Thinking and My Teaching

The interview left a lasting impression on me. I left the house amid promises that she would show me how to make tamales. It was a very pleasant visit, she and her family are very amiable people, and I was definitely the entertainment of the day.

The visit has had a profound effect on my teaching. Although I am a new teacher and because what I do in the classroom changes daily, or at least weekly, I am probably not able to see all the effects, but certainly a few of the ramifications are clear to me.

The first was that all of the children and their lives stood out for me as if in a new dimension. I could see them more clearly and love them much more dearly.

Through this and other home visits, I came to understand that although all the parents of my children all speak Spanish, they represent a multicultural group. One family is Honduran, and their culture is very different from that of the Mexicans. Another couple is interracial: Mexican and Vietnamese, and they, too, see things differently from the majority, and have very different expectations from the classroom.

Parent Goals

The children and the minutiae of their lives assumes great importance to these mothers because the children (and their husbands) are the sole purpose of their lives. The women come to take seriously the arguments and disputes of their children. If one child fights with another, the mothers will argue it out in front of my door the next morning, often chastising a child whose parents are not there to stand up for him or her. A few of the women have come to me highly agitated that their child was not seated properly, that is, they were given a chair lower than someone else's, or they had been placed at a table with children who play too roughly, or who are considered to be of a lower academic ability. I saw, first hand, the effects of oppression, not as an intellectual exercise, but how it is played out in the lives of the oppressed.

The second major effect was that I felt I needed to give the children, particularly the girls, an opportunity to stretch their visions a little and we had some talk about making choices. These were difficult conversations,

because, while the boys chose to be the same things that all boys choose, a fireman, a policeman, an astronaut or whatever daddy does, the little girls were mostly silent or responded with wanting to be a mother. One said she wanted to be a teacher. I have some hope that while "What do I want to do when I grow up?" was clearly an empty set at the outset of the conversation, there is at least a schema now to be filled. Unfortunately, in this, my first year I was swamped with ideas and plans and I did not have enough time to sort and implement them. It is mostly in retrospect that I feel the need to start the conversation earlier next year and repeat it often throughout the year.

The third difference was that I realized that 15 minutes of reading was not nearly enough for children who come from homes where reading is not the normal evening's activity. I started reading through their nap time and again at the end of the day. They particularly like being read to at nap time because it is a difficult time for those who cannot sleep. Many of the children began to form mental images of the story being read. Their progress was remarkable. At the start of the year, they had tolerance for nothing but picture books. Gradually I read longer and longer books until they were able to listen to books with few illustrations. Some of this is simply developmental, I am sure, but there was a leap in their comprehension of stories and their ability to stay focused in the absence of pictures. One of the books, Sapo y Sepo. Un Año Entero, they would tolerate not at all at the first of the year. Two

minutes into the book and they were talking and playing among themselves. By the end of the year, the book held their attention for cover to cover readings. My struggle this year in the area of literacy was the lack of good children's books in Spanish. I had a few excellent books for the learning of the decoding, but what I wanted to do was to create the magic of reading, the enchantment of engagement in the story. There were precious few books for this. For the coming year I will look for biographies which can be empowering a well

I think that most importantly for me, this home visit broke the ice and I visited several of the children's homes. The parents ceased to be adversarial and many became my allies, and some, a few became friends.

as entertaining.

I think that most importantly for me, this home visit broke the ice and I visited several of the children's homes. The parents ceased to be adversarial and many became my allies, and some, a few became friends. I never did another formal interview, but I went to socialize, to celebrate a birthday, to see the new baby, to bring books to a child with the chicken pox, etc. My slight command of Spanish became a matter of humor, and a cause for them to help. Cristian's mother came to my classroom every afternoon to talk with two children to help them in their language development.

I stopped by Diane's house to give her mother a card Diane had made for her and had accidentally left at school. I was able to use the occasion to talk about Diane's progress in school and what I thought needed to happen for her. The woman began coming into the classroom early to help clean up.

The same day, I dropped off Gabriel's Mothers Day card, and his mother, who had been my chief critic, responded warmly. She did not invite me into the house, but my visit was unexpected and we did chat for a few minutes most amiably in her driveway. I left knowing that I had converted an antagonist.

By far the most productive visit was with Jessica's mother. In the beginning of the year she told me not to hesitate to punish her, that she was a disobedient, stubborn child. And indeed she was. She came into class punching, kicking and quick to take offense. I had occasion to drive Jessica home several afternoons and in these visits I would brag about Jessica's helpfulness, her quick mind, and how well she was doing in school. I cannot take credit for all of Jessica's turnaround, but I am sure these casual visits helped Mrs. Diaz to see her daughter in a new light, which, in turn, gave Jessica the space to develop her innately sweet nature.

Next year I will visit early and often. I may have an early in the year party in my home to get to know and be known more quickly.





Allium/sativum/garlic: Since the ancient Romans and Greeks, this herb has been used for coughs, colds, bronchitis, and to help control blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Professional Reflections: Funds of Knowledge Research

by Patricia Lumpkin

Finding ways to involve parents of ESL and Bilingual students in the school atmosphere and using knowledge from the home to change curriculum for the better were main goals of this research team. Due to the great guidance provided by the supervising professors of this project, the communication lines were always open between the researchers and the professors. This kind of cooperative effort has greatly affected my interest in keeping this type of visitation going with my students and their parents. Many concerns and questions that arose during this project were valued by the professors and discussed in an atmosphere of community and caring. This group of educators helped to support my opinion that most teachers are trying to create an environment in their classrooms that will allow all students to make the best of their education. Obstacles to students achievement, often, seem insurmountable, such as second-language learning, parent apathy, and basic survival needs. Another major obstacle is the assumption that there is a lack of interest in education in the homes of their students. My experience has taught me that this is by no means accurate. Since everyone of these is affected by the home environment, this research has

proven to me that the need for knowledge of the home environment will be beneficial to me. By giving support and direction to home visits that were positive experiences for the parents and myself, this cooperative effort has helped me to create a better curriculum that fits the needs of each of my students.

Learning about Viet and his family has made me even more aware that the lack of literacy in a home initially is not indicative of a lack of desire for a good education.

My Background

Houston, Texas has been my home for fifteen years now. Living in Southeast Texas most of my life has limited my views of the world even though I am reasonably well-educated and try to keep in touch with world events. My two children are adults now. This means that I can dedicate my time to finding better ways to help my students succeed in their endeavors. I am completing my Master's Degree

in Early Childhood Education at the University of Houston. The need to add English-as-a-Second Language to my certification arose when I was offered a second-grade ESL class in Houston Independent School District for the school year 1996-97. My Early Childhood certification and experiences in teaching young children had given me a solid basis for this addition since the instructional strategies and understanding of language development are much the same as in ESL instruction.

My Reasons for Doing This Research

I was very interested in learning more about my students' lives and literacy when this research opportunity was presented to me. Going into the homes of my students gave me greater insight into the life experiences that limit language development and also those that point out the need for getting a good education. Learning about Viet and his family has made me even more aware that the lack of literacy in a home initially is not indicative of a lack of desire for a good education. This close family has proven to me that anything may be possible. Experiences and culture will affect adult immigrants' determination to learn. This family is

determined to make sure that the children of the family have every opportunity to choose a career that they want and pursue it.

Being able to pass a certification test to teach children for whom English is a second language was not enough for me. I felt that, in order to do my best teaching, I would have to know more about the culture and the family structure of these families. English is my native language. Consequently, if a teacher asked my parents to help me with my homework, they were able to work through it with me, even if they didn't understand it immediately. Viet would come to class with his homework. However, it was either incomplete or completed incorrectly. After going to his home and observing the isolated conditions there, I was able to believe my other students who would tell me some curious excuses for not doing their homework or not being able to get help with it. My own circumstances did not allow me to automatically be aware of how limited my ESL students' environments actually were.

The realization came to me quite quickly that I would need much more experience in approaching parents and families of second-language learners in a non-threatening and non-critical manner. This would help me to accomplish my task of connecting these parents to school activities and their children's education. It is not easy to approach parents about problems with any child. Many teachers just accept it as one of the few times that they have to deal with the parents. My visits created such an enthusiasm in Viet that I wanted to go more often than I did. His progress in reading and

Since they rarely have to go outside the community for necessities, they do not have many opportunities to engage in English conversations. They simply won't have to use any English to get needs met if they continue their isolation.

language was well above my other newer immigrants. Perhaps my grades would always have been those A's my father wanted, if my teachers had made visits to my home. My parents were never involved in school activities because they were too busy to be bothered. Students of all categories today have a much greater need for their parents to be involved at school or to at least feel that they can ask questions and get answers.

The Community and the School

Park Place Elementary is part of the Houston Independent School District in Houston, Texas. There are more than fifty languages spoken in this district. There is a bilingual program for Hispanic students in which they are taught to be proficient in Spanish first and then in English. All of the other students must do their learning by listening only to English instruction. My Vietnamese students are in this situation. The ideal would be to provide these students with Vietnamese-fluent teachers. At the very least, there should be an office of the district that would have someone who could speak the languages, or most of them, available to translate important information to the parents of these children in their own language. Even so, I am finding that the parents of these students

really do want to stay apprised of their student's progress and want to do everything they can to insure success. Promoting their interest is why the concept of home visits would open a different type of communication that would be very valuable.

The area in which these students live is predominantly Hispanic and Vietnamese. The school population is about 80% Hispanic and 15% Vietnamese. The Vietnamese population is so large in the area that there are apartment complexes that have only Vietnamese residents. As have the Hispanic and Black populations, they have developed their own little communities within the community. There are a few grocery stores and other small businesses that are attuned to the needs of this community of immigrants. Mostly, these small shops and businesses are run by Vietnamese people. The residents can then get foods and other items that are common to the culture of Vietnam. My students love to bring snack foods from these stores and explain what the labels mean. This is an opening for a great literacy crossover experience in my class. Since they rarely have to go outside the community for necessities, they do not have many opportunities to engage in English conversations. They simply won't have to use any English to get needs met if they continue their isolation.

Park Place is fortunate to have several Mormon gentlemen come into the school to help tutor some of the children. There are always two of these young men who have learned Vietnamese and help our students. The elders were quite willing to help me with the translations for this project. They went to all but one of the visits and were a tremendous help. They visit most of the families from the school in their homes already. Most of my students had already had visits from them in past years. This is another reason why those translators mentioned above could be such a great advantage to teachers. These gentlemen are asked to attend parent/teacher conferences to translate at the school quite often. They have translated many of the permission slips and assessment notices sent home to the parents.

One major issue that creates a barrier between the school and the Vietnamese parents is that the PTO meetings are only translated into Spanish. The only time that anyone asked for a Vietnamese translator during this school year was in May for the Spring Program. They only began looking for a translator the day before the program and could not find anyone on such short notice. But, at least, the effort was made. Perhaps this won't be a one time effort. This lack of translation keeps Viet's parents and probably many others away.

The Family and Home Environment

Viet lives with both parents and three siblings, one boy and two girls. They moved to America in February, 1996 from Binh Hoa,

Vietnam. The parents were farmers in Vietnam. Farming in Vietnam requires little literacy. The rest of their family still lives and farms in Vietnam. Viet's parents went to school in Vietnam for five years as young children. They then had to quit to help with the farming on the family land. After the father was released from a Viet Cong prison in 1992, they began making preparations to come to the United States. Immigrating to this country is not as quick and easy as some Americans may think. These people made many sacrifices to come to this country. Both parents admitted that they were terrified of moving to America. They knew that they would have to work hard to give their children a chance to succeed here.

Our first visit was very stilted

Both parents admitted that they were terrified of moving to America. They knew that they would have to work hard to give their children a chance to succeed here.

and formal. We were escorted to a rectangular folding table next to the kitchen. The couch and love seat in the living room would have been less formal, but that was not to be. All conversations were held over the entire six months at that folding metal table. The tile floors were always clean and glossy. Furniture was sparse. The living area contained only one card table, the couch and the love seat. The only other furniture outside of the bedrooms was the rectangular metal table in the dinette area, some folding chairs and one low round table

about two feet in diameter.

Taking careful note of any literacy in the home was part of my goal. The walls were bare of artwork of a commercial kind. There were some examples of children's work and a few awards that the older children had received in the last school year. The oldest daughter had made a wall hanging while studying Brazil in one of her middle school classes. A huge jack-o-lantern drawing was next to a photograph reproduction of the Pope. It took quite a few occasions of looking at photographs of the apartment to realize the connection between the two pictures. There were angel stickers plastered all around the big orange face of the jack-o-lantern right next to the picture of the Pope. Two wall calendars were posted next to the kitchen. These had been sent to the home from family members in Vietnam. Neither calendar had more than one or two notes over a whole month's page.

A television sat in the front corner of the living area on a card table. The VCR sat next to it and video tapes were stacked beneath. On the wall, a plexiglass board about 2 1/2 feet by 3 1/2 feet had been attached with some kind of small bolt. On this board, there was a list of approximately 70 spelling words written with a wipe-off marker. At first, I thought that all of the words had been from Viet's lists. Then I realized that the other children were also in the initial learning stages also. This is the most obvious example of the importance of school to this family. I never noticed any books or magazines on any of the tables. This type of material might have been stored in the

closets when they cleaned the room for our arrival. When asked about books and magazines, the mother only said that the Bible was the only book besides the children's school books. I couldn't afford to just run out and buy Viet some children's books. The day after the first visit when this topic arose I began unloading some old books in my classroom library. This library consists of books that I have purchased over the last ten years. He kept asking me if they were "to keep?" I just kept repeating that they were.

Another possibility that occurred to me after the last visit was that some of their Vietnamese books were still in Vietnam. I had the elders call her to ask if this was the case. She responded with a solid "no." This question stemmed from reviewing my notes and noticing the conversation that follows. At one point, I asked if they had decorative items packed away because there were only one or two in the whole apartment. The mother looked a little sad as she explained how quickly the family had to leave Vietnam when the approvals for emigration had finally arrived. She plans to have some of her things sent when they have more shelves and tables to display them. When I looked at my classroom and realized that I had more personal items there that were expressions of my self than this whole family did, I was quite humbled.

The rest of the apartment is much the same. There are two bedrooms and compact kitchen/dinette area combination. Six people share the single bathroom. The apartment was extremely neat during most of the visits. There is very little

clutter around the rooms. The children's room had more clutter under a card table that held the second television set. As a teacher, I could identify it as mostly notebooks and papers from school.

The Nintendo game is played on the television in children's room. One of the most relaxed visits included a lesson by the boys on Nintendo strategies. I am glad I didn't video tape myself showing my lack of expertise. I wish that I had video-taped the boys as they showed great patience and a good sense of humor during our role-reversal. The need for problem-solving in Nintendo is a great part of the skill needed to do well. This was one home in which I was glad to see this television-related item.

Acceptance of my Presence

I was received very cordially by the mother immediately. She and the children were very willing to answer questions. I was disturbed that I was unable to make Nhiem feel comfortable enough with me to ask questions of her own. Many times, I asked if she had questions about what Viet was learning in the class. She had a very consistent answer. She loved what I was doing and thought I was wonderful. Don't forget that this was all told to me through translators.

Finally, during one of my last visits, I asked her again if she had any questions. She opened up a little to say that she was concerned about the class Viet was put into the year before and this year. She felt that he should have been with only children who were just beginning to learn the language. I was very glad to be able to ease her discomfort. I

explained how much easier it would be for Viet to learn the language by listening and talking with children who already knew the language. I was surprised by the question, however, because the other children were in middle school. She had not expected them to be put in a class with much younger children. After my explanation, she seemed happier about it. This is the sort of question that must run through many of the parents minds. I would be curious to know if they ever get around to asking it and the many others they must have. This, of course, is another reason to try to make the connection between home and school more reciprocal.

Learning about Attitudes Toward Literacy and Success

A strange dual attitude exists in these homes. Viet's mother is very concerned that her children are able to grow up and follow any career they choose. But along with this concern for good education, there is a great absence of literacy in the home of my research subject. Not only was there little literacy in English, but very few Vietnamese literacy evidence. They had some videos that were supposed to help them learn English. A sentence would be spoken in both languages, then the sentences would appear on the screen. The children play with the old Nintendo game. They read their Vietnamese Bible and keep track of events on a Vietnamese wall calendar. This family goes to the public library to find books that the children need for school. They do not check out Vietnamese books that are also available at this location.

They celebrate some special events with some common songs. But music, and particularly singing, is not part of their daily life. Viet shows me every-day in class, however, that he has a great curiosity about the world. The two girls have watched television shows that have given them the idea of becoming policewomen. I kept trying to find the origination point of this curiosity.

Perhaps the public library has helped to spur this curiosity. The family knows where the public library is and that they can use it. When the older children need reference material for school, they make use of it. There is no effort to use it for recreational reading or for the learning tool it could be. They could be going because they all want to read - ANYTHING. I thought they didn't because they don't have transportation. But the children get to school on the public bus system. I found out that they just don't think of it as a place they could or should go for fun.

These literacy limits also create a great gap between teachers and parents. This is not a gap of either party's choosing. It exists due to the cultural and language differences between the teacher and the families.

Learning about my Students' Environmental Language

Experience with the English language is limited in several ways and for several major reasons. They do not go into the English-speaking community very often and only then for necessities. The residents of the apartment complex and also of much of the surrounding area are Vietnamese. They have joined a

As I would ask my students about home activities to use in the curriculum, I kept hitting a dead end. . . I continued to ask questions about how they lived in Vietnam to try to solve the riddle.

local church which has services in Vietnamese. Otherwise, they do not go to any social functions in the area. They go to the grocery store across the street and the small local markets for food that is packaged and sent from Vietnam. Viet and his siblings are not allowed to play with many children in the complex because the parents keep strict control over all activities.

The father speaks a little English and was given a hand-held computer translator by the Human Operations office that arranged their immigration. The mother is learning a few words from the four children as they work on homework in the afternoons. Opportunities for this family to see the value of literacy in the business environment are few. Watching television is the most exposure that the children get to the English-speaking community outside of school.

The parents and four children live in a two-bedroom apartment. The father works for a carwash. Neighbors in the apartment complex helped him find this job. This precluded the necessity of going out and hunting for a job without language skills. The mother has a slight disability and doesn't work. She also doesn't get out of the house except to shop for necessities or to go to church. When asked if she did any volunteer work for the church, Nhiem offered that she would not go anywhere by herself so she did not help at the

church.

They have no other social obligations with neighbors because they stay so much to themselves. They, literally, eat, sleep, go to school and church and read the Bible together. The mother on a rare occasion goes to a neighbors apartment for a chat. As I would ask my students about home activities to use in the curriculum, I kept hitting a dead end. The biggest question about this isolation was whether or not this was something that had just started when they came to America or if it was a cultural norm.

I continued to ask questions about how they lived in Vietnam to try to solve the riddle. At one point, Nhiem mentioned the bad people that were around the complex. I immediately tried to find out about the bad people in Vietnam. She said that there were also people like this in Vietnam. The isolation didn't just happen after they came to America. Surprisingly, they didn't have any other kind of social life in Vietnam other than spending more time with their family. One main reason for this was that they spent most of every day working on the farm. The weather in Vietnam allows for a perpetual planting season. They simply had too much work to do at home. The church was, also, their main social place in their homeland.

During the next visit, she mentioned that she probably would let the children go out

more if it was not so dangerous in their neighborhood. She spoke of the young men who played basketball on the court in the front of the complex. It is the only open space where the children can play. These older kids monopolize it at all times of the day. The street in front of the complex is also a deterrent. It is a boulevard with three lanes going each direction. There is no park near the apartment complex for she and the children to use. The nearest one is across the major freeway two miles down the road which separates their neighborhood from that of the elementary school. Although this park has an after-school and summer program that is quite extensive, it is not in a convenient place for them. The children would never be allowed to go there without the mother. I never could find out why she would or could not meet them there.

As I tried to explain about various parks and places they could go at no cost, the mother kept saying that Viet could go anywhere that I would be with him. She misunderstood and thought that I was asking if he could go with me. When I told her that these were places that she could take the children, she simply shut the conversation down. She could not be convinced that she would be comfortable in these places. The reaction did not improve when the elders tried to tell her that other Vietnamese parents went with their children. Nhiem simply was not going to go. The elders tried to help by saying that this was a common state of affairs with these families. The few that are seen participating are only the tip of the iceberg. All of this running around town

is just not part of the way they live their lives.

Learning about Vietnamese Education

One aspect of the culture that directly affects the families relationship to school is the respect and almost fearful reverence of educators. Parent involvement in Vietnam has a completely different context than in most American school districts. It was evident that Nhiem wanted to please the teacher in the interviews. This opened a direct avenue to the subject of Vietnamese education. All of the children had attended Vietnamese schools before coming to America. Nhiem was quick to react animatedly when asked about the differences between the schools of the two countries.

She took quite a few minutes to explain how rigid the teachers were in Vietnam. Two particular events may surprise the more conservative American teacher. The first was a description of what happens when a child is late for or absent from school. If a child is late, the door to the school is already locked. The child must return home and get their parents. All must then go to the school to explain why the child was late and apologize to the faculty for being disrespectful. The parents must then apologize and for not raising their children to be respectful. This seems extreme, but it is effective. She says that children are only late when they are ill and are accompanied by their parents the first time they try to go to school that day.

Discipline in Vietnamese schools is extremely harsh by American standards and U.N.

standards, for that matter. Children are slapped immediately if the teacher considers any comment or action of the child to be disrespectful. This could include responses to questions which are spoken in a short tone or daydreaming at any time. No consideration for bad moods or lack of sleep are taken into consideration. Again, the parent is considered responsible for these issues and must come to school after it happens to apologize for the child's behavior.

Parents of Vietnamese children are never asked to volunteer for anything in these schools. Children don't go on field trips or do activities that allow for any excitable behavior. Nhiem was able to make the connection between the diversity of cultures in America with the single-culture schools in Vietnam. There are not many families that move to Vietnam that send their children to Vietnamese schools. Those that do must comply with the rules at all times. No allowances are made for coming from a different culture. From the beginning, all children are expected to be taught correct behavior and supported in their study habits by their parents. I have met so many parents already in my teaching career that not only refuse to take responsibility for their children, but also teach their children to try to blame their behaviors on everyone else. The teaching of values by Vietnamese parents is exemplified by the willingness of non-Americanized students to come into class ready to work and follow class rules. They are so controlled that they would not disobey a teacher intentionally. Their lack of language would be the only reason that they do not

respond to a direction or do an activity with the class.

With these situational differences in mind, Nhiem observed the disrespectful attitudes of neighbor children in her apartment complex in Houston. She didn't even want her children to be around Vietnamese children who had been Americanized. The discipline was so lax in American schools that the children had no respect for any adults anymore. Her children could play with each other out-side the apartment and with only a few other children that she had met and respected. These value differences will undoubtedly perpetuate the isolation these families experience. Another child in this class had said on numerous occasions that she could not get any help with her homework because she was not allowed to leave the house. That cynicism set in on most of these occasions until the evidence was seen with my own eyes and the explanation heard, although from a different mother, with my own ears.

New Beliefs and Goals

Parents and students who are learning English as a second language from teachers who do not speak their native language must deal with an even greater communication barrier. I see now that a great improvement would be made if teachers could breach this communication barrier and many cultural barriers to provide parents and students with a caring comfortable learning environment that encourages cooperation.

Through the learning I have done in this research, I have decided that teachers in today's

culturally-diverse communities need to assess more than the academic knowledge of students. Ongoing assessment of family situations, backgrounds, culture and relationships would complete the picture of the whole child. Without this knowledge, teachers and parents will continue to have difficulty with communication and with the setting of mutual goals for the children.

Viet struggles, as do his parents, with sentence structure and the various spelling patterns of the language. Because I know of the limits for assistance in their environment, I have seen that all my students' homework must be limited to creative exploration with the parents in Science or Math and basic repetitive review sheets that cover language topics which the children have studied many times. Even directions throw the parents and students off balance when it is worded differently than the children have heard during class. They may be able to read the words but can not determine the meaning because of the structure of the sentence or the meanings of new words. When other children told me their reasons for not finishing or not understanding their homework, I really did not believe that they could not get help. Now, I do! The development of good language structure and comprehension will fall on the teachers of these children.

As I made these visits, another thought occurred to me. As I have become familiar with many foreign students at the university, my opinion of these friends are not affected by the lack of perfect English speech patterns or the difficulty they have in

finding just the right words to express themselves. Do some teachers complain about the ESL students because they still expect perfection? Some of the teachers that I work with seem to expect much more than these young children can actually do within the short time span that they have been exposed to the language. They have an easier time learning the language than their adult parents, but still need time to become completely knowledgeable and comfortable with the language.

Due to these realizations, my expectations and my instruction in this class changed because homework, although much valued by the families, could be developing bad habits rather than good. Almost all instruction is now given in small groups and cooperative learning is used in almost every situation except that of required testing to make sure that the children were using the language often and continuing appropriate learning by constant communication. Understanding the limits of the family has eased my stress in trying to push the children into a faster level of development than I would have expected of them prior to this research.

The Results

The intended goal of my visits was to find the literacy and funds of knowledge in the home of my student. What I found was a great desire to make sure that the children get a good education. I also found a tremendous family unit that depended on each other almost completely.



Apocynaceae/periwinkle: Rich in suppersitious, the periwinkle is used to prevent hemorrhages and as an astrigent.



Making It Real: Teachers Discover the Value of Home Visits

by Glenn DeVoogd

Is there anyone who really believes teachers shouldn't do home visits? In my own personal studies I have never run across a recommendation suggesting teachers shouldn't visit the homes of students. Yet there continues to be a great deal of hesitancy on the part of teachers to actually find it important enough to do. Though most teachers know the advice, having heard it from principals and professors, the activity nevertheless fails to move teachers to visit their students' homes. Like so much of life, antiseptic, organized education alone does not push us from knowledge to action. Cognitive knowledge has limitations.

For too long, those of us coming from the western essayist literacy tradition, have shunned and demoted all knowledge, other than empirical, as unimportant (Heshusius & Ballard, 1996). We lift up the empirical beyond highest in status among the ways of knowing. For many in professionals, the empirical is the only worthy way of knowing. Yet in our personal lives we come to value the love and

comfort of our emotional ties between our spouses and our children. We are motivated by emotions that punctuate our cognitive understanding, making action important and worth doing.

Many researchers have commented on the importance of affect in education and yet we do not take their thoughts to action. Oatley and Nundy (1996) discuss how easy even the most abstract understandings and actions can be if the emotional conditions are optimal. Several others look at the cognitive and emotional dissonance that occurs when the culture of the classroom does not fit that of the learner (Ogbu, 1987, Philips, 1972). In a similar way, through home visits many of the teachers of our project have found emotional ways of knowing and loving the homes they visited and that has made all the difference.

In the next few paragraphs I would briefly like to explore beyond the typical empirical examinations to explore some of the range of the visceral, emotive understandings and beyond that may in fact move teachers from the cognitive knowledge that home visits should be done to the actual meaningful event. Though my comments will be limited to

the two teachers I worked most closely with, Pat Lumpkin and Deborah Shafto, I'm sure many similar experiences occurred with other teachers doing home visits.

Perhaps most typical experience teachers have in home visits is that of an emotional tie of friendship comes to pass between the family and the teacher. When Deb Shafto visited Mrs. Martínez, she noticed the care with which Mrs. Martínez prepared the house and snacks for the visit. The house was immaculate with everything in its place. The juice was purchased that very day in preparation for the visit. As the discussion between parent and teacher took place, the children gathered around listening, watching, and smiling at Ms Shafto. Perhaps it is that Ms Shafto felt it important enough to visit the home that made the mother and children so excited about the visit. In a similar way, the sense that she was an important guest did much to endear Ms Shafto to the Martínez family.

While at first the parents in Deborah Shafto's class got together to complain about her style of teaching, after the home visits to Mrs. Martínez and other

parents' houses, parents became supporters of Ms Shafto's teaching style. In fact they became such supporters that when a mother came to complain that her child had been hit by another child, the parents stepped in to defend Ms Shafto, even though they were not familiar with the specific incident. The emotional bond that commenced and strengthened during home visits carried over into emotional support for Ms Shafto's work as a teacher.

Ms Lumpkin also discovered an emotional affinity for the family she visited. While before the home visit, she knew cognitively that it would be hard for the children to do their homework, after the home visit, her feelings took on a strong emotional tone. In her conversations with me she noted, "Whereas at first I thought they probably would not have anyone to help them with the homework, after I saw the situation they were in, I realized THEY REALLY DIDN'T HAVE A-N-Y-O-N-E to help them with their homework. In part this changed how Pat began to think about homework. Even more importantly, she felt a sense of advocacy and urgency about the need for home support for homework. Again these emotions acquired during the home visit changed the respective teachers' actions and emotions in the classroom.

Beyond the emotional level, the teachers gained a holistic sense for the home. They experienced a visceral feeling of the home. The unfamiliar smells of the Mexican and Vietnamese foods filled the air with an exotic

perfume. They saw the awards and papers that the children brought from schools taped up on the living room walls of the small apartments. By visiting the homes they gained a personal visual and emotive understanding of how these people were different from others of that culture.

Throughout the home visits, what impressed me the most was the emotional, visual, and visceral preceptions teachers experienced. Is it in fact an emotional distance that separates us as teachers from our students? It is often these emotional, touching events that stay with us. It is this emotion that gives us joy and pleasure. It is this type of memory that we cherish, putting it in the treasure chest of warm memories. Teachers give to society in many ways, working long hours to prepare for teaching in university classes, preparing for lessons, but often we don't see this altruistic caring for others.

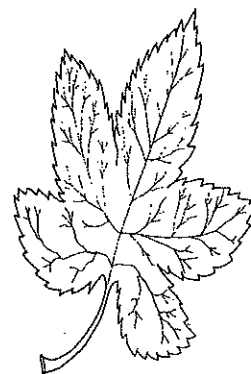
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Viola tricolor/heartsease: The heart-shaped flowers of this herb were used to mend broken hearts; it is used today for bronchitis, rheumatism, and skin disease such as eczema.



Breaking the Silence: Inquiry, Reflection, and Voice in Teacher Research Collaboratives

by Irma N. Guadarrama

The evidence of teachers' undergoing self-transformations resulting from investigating their work and/or exploring discursive possibilities for creating constructionist frameworks has been so compelling that we're pressed to consider how inquiry and reflection can play a greater role in every phase of teacher education. Clearly the inquiry/reflection process implemented by teachers whose papers we present in this volume has facilitated their abilities to develop relevant research strategies in which they probe and question existing assumptions and adopt new practicing paradigms. Among the noted salient characteristics of the inquiry/reflection process that has surfaced in the Funds of Knowledge Teacher Research Collaborative is the recurring, spiraling feature in which inquiry leads to reflection that leads back to inquiry and so on. However, if we consider inquiry/reflection process to be integral to the professional development of teachers, it is important to ascertain the essential role and manifestations of "voice" in this process. I argue that the inquiry/reflection process is not complete without the outlet, vehicle, forum or any other means by which to

facilitate the expression of "voice" by teacher researchers, thus, inviting other practitioners into the circle of dialogue or even into the research process.

At the heart of action teacher research among collaborators is the voice or voices of the participants. Compared to raising single voices, the collective voices of teachers and students often results in a text that conveys the

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dynamic interplay between researcher(s) and subjects, and is especially held to scrutiny for its interpretation of the data. Ethnographers concede that the way that collective voices are represented is important in that it oftentimes conveys as much meaning as does the actual data (Wolcott, 1995; Van Maanen, 1995). Collaborative

research maintains a position among empowerment models and as such, has an important function of serving as a vehicle for elevating the voices of teacher researchers and their students. In this article I discuss how two collaborative research projects between public school teachers, their students, and I, as a university teacher, collaborated to bring together resources and viewpoints, and in the process, created a curriculum that opened up opportunities for dialogue, inquiry, and reflection that has led us to the challenge of capturing the multiple voices, making interpretations, and opening venues for others to learn from them. In artistic terms, it is a matter of making the ephemeral permanent or enough so we can integrate it in our knowledge base.

Collaborative research by its own definition, requires the interplay of expressions of ideas typical within a constructionist context and relies on the professional and even personal relationship between and among the researchers. The dynamics between the collaborators' socially constructed knowledge and individual as well as collective perspective on the research project undoubtedly result in a web of rich complexities difficult

to capture by a single authorial voice. One mode of representation that has gained recognition among teacher researchers and maintains the form, function, and integrity of ethnographic research is the narrative approach.

The narrative, or simply the human story, has long been considered a means by which humans gained insight into their lives, learned about their past, even developed futuristic notions from them. However, only recently have researchers come to rely on the structure of the narrative to organize teacher research data, create texts for learning, and theorize practical knowledge (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988; Albrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1993; Hollingsworth, 1992; Miller, 1990; Schubert & Ayers, 1992; Guadarrama, 1995).

Richardson (1995) delves into the virtues of narratology in terms of its capability to capture the "collective voices," often regarded essential to a sociologist. Indeed, harnessing the collective voices of a group, especially of teachers, is important from a researcher's point of view and the narrative texts can be useful in depicting the complexity and richness of data.

The collective voices of teachers can serve as powerful testimonials of effective (as well as the ill-conceived) practices and program designs. Teachers are categorically marginalized professionals because, despite their knowledge, experience, and virtuosity as civic leaders, their status and therefore, their voice in the professional field is reduced or silenced (cf. McLaughlin and Tierney, 1993). Yet, it is commonly ascertained by teacher educators and re-

searchers that, without any doubt, a teacher's practical and theoretical knowledge is sine cum quo the most useful among professional knowledge categories. Teachers possess an insider view that is uniquely strategic to the employment of action research; practical, grounded knowledge, an endemic understanding of tasks to be performed and expectations to be fulfilled. The issue of why teachers are regarded in such low esteem is too cumbersome to take issue in this paper (cf. Apple, 1978). However, the focus here is on the valuable contributions that teacher researcher collaboratives make in advancing improvement for educating students, and how the necessary conditions for teacher's voices to emerge are virtually impossible to create within the existing structure of teacher professionalism. The research collaboratives that we established embrace an alternative theoretical and professional development framework.

The Context

Throughout this paper I will refer to ongoing collaborative research projects begun almost two years ago, illuminating the special qualities of the designs, as well as critiques on their shortcomings. As in most university settings, the development of any collaboration with teachers in schools is optional for faculty members. I opted to play the role of a curriculum specialist, albeit on a "voluntary" basis. The main focus of the plan was to bring a curricular "program" for teachers to consider and that would include my working with their students.

The context of the teacher

research projects are a total of three in year one and four in year two. All of these are in one of the nation's largest school district, and located in low-income areas of the city. The span of the grade levels are from first to fifth grades. The students in this classroom are bilingual; some are just learning English. A brief sociological survey of the school community reveals that a large number of parents belong to the working class, a majority dwell in apartments (there is very little single family housing available in one of the school communities), and many are considered immigrants, having lived in the United States less than twelve years and were educated in their home countries, albeit in variable degrees. One community has a proportionately large Central American population, mainly from El Salvador and Nicaragua. Even though the children speak Spanish, they come from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

The collaborative research projects I selected to participate in were the Fable Writing Project and the Funds of Knowledge for Teaching, both of which are briefly described in the following sections.

The Fable Writing Project

This writing project engages children in writing their original fables in their native language-Spanish. Some of the children wrote their fables in English, others used their bilingual skills by writing one in English and Spanish, although most children did not practice code-switching or otherwise mixed the English and Spanish codes. The focus, however, was on the content inherent in the genre rather than

linguistic features inherent in their original stories.

All of the teachers in the first and second year of the Fable Writing Project were bilingual, all are Hispanic with the exception of one who was African American. Five of the teachers were males, one was female, and the three of the teachers at that time were recent student teacher graduates who had assumed classroom teaching duties upon the request of the principal since the original teacher had recently resigned.

As the author of the research project, I approached the teachers, having selected them with the assistance of their principals or they had volunteered. I had a three week plan that involved: 1) reading fables to the children, using read aloud techniques, simple costumes and props; 2) facilitating their understanding of the fable as a literary genre, using process writing techniques that target writing original fables; and 3) monitoring the writing of original fables, culminating in a rehearsed program in which students read or act out their fables. Two of the classrooms in year 2 opted to videotape their students' fable skits. The teachers' roles were primarily to support the project, however, no specifics were discussed. As a consequence, each teacher contributed in individualistic ways, ranging from exhibiting a strong emotional response to obvious avoidance of tasks perceived as extraneous to the "normal" teaching duties.

Being conscience of the past carelessness of researchers "using" their subjects and not contributing anything in return, I assumed the task of publishing a

When children are far removed from the "decontextualized" language associated with the situated language used in formal schooling, their ability to succeed in learning to read and write is hampered, making the likelihood to succeed progressively worse throughout their education.

volume of the children's original fables, illustrated by a student teacher and printed with funds from the University. I also procured funds to purchase a small number of children's books which I distributed to the student writers who demonstrated high levels of writing competency as well as creativity. Selecting these students proved more difficult, however, than anticipated since all of the students were deserving of a "prize." Each student received a certificate of appreciation for writing an original fable and a copy of the publication titled, *Cuéntame una fábula* in year one, and *Cuéntame más fábulas* in year two.

Rationale for Selecting the Fable Genre: Connecting Orality with Literacy

Time constraints compel research collaborators to carefully select their projects that, even when scheduled in short time frames, tend to consume more resources than intended. Thus, the projects I chose were carefully preconceived to optimize the benefits within the parameters of limited resources. In this section I elaborate on why I chose to collaborate with teachers in the Fable Writing Project. The rationale is rich in description because it represents a theoretical framework that is basic to my work in teacher

education and thus, plays a motivating role as a member of the research collaborative.

A number of studies have elaborated on the discourse chasm that exists between the home and school and seems to underscore the recurring problems apparent in some children (whose dominant language is other than English) when acquiring "schooled" literacy skills (Scollon & Scollon, 1981; Scribner & Cole, 1991; Heath, 1983). This appears to be problematic in light of the connection between oral skills and literacy development (cf. Snow, 1991). When children are far removed from the "decontextualized" language associated with the situated language used in formal schooling, their ability to succeed in learning to read and write is hampered, making the likelihood to succeed progressively worse throughout their education.

Wertsch (1991) refers to the "schooled" discourse as the voice of decontextualized rationality. He distinguishes decontextualized from contextualized forms of discourse by explaining that the former is used in the representation of referentially semantic content, while the latter projects representation that is concrete, inclusive of the communicative intent that is framed purposely and clearly by the interlocutors. The "home"

language of the student then, is described not just in terms of language dominance or proficiency but that it also encompasses the variable language use (including literacy) among speakers and their relationship to each other and their utterances. An understanding of this sociolinguistic tapestry embedded in a bilingual/bicultural context is relevant to teachers who must make curricular decisions in selecting activities and strategies, framing the oral and literacy perspective to help students (re)negotiate the discourse differences successfully, rendering them more flexibility in using both concomitantly.

The use of the fable genre falls directly under strategic curricular decision making, and in effect, brings oral and literate traditions deeply rooted in the native language of the student (Spanish) into the "schooled" domain. The teacher is able to facilitate children's interaction inclusive of discourse styles that are used commonly in the home and the school. The use of fable genre and the dialogue generated between and among students and teachers in a fable writing activity functions as a unique discourse style of its own that blends and negotiates between two traditionally separate modes of language use.

The fables shared through read-aloud and dialogue serve as mediating filters. The writing of original fables by students represents an expressive outlet that combines the use of a literary voice along with their own. Students created a story revolving around a "lesson," quite a literary skill that challenges even adults. An analysis of the "lessons" embedded in

their original fables reveals that the young writers based them to a great degree on the criterion of practicality (Guadarrama, 1996). This is evidence of a mixing or blending of contextualized with decontextualized discourse styles. Writing fables allow children a space in which they could renegotiate between two discourse styles and project

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creatively their expressive voice.

Given the moralistic quality of the fable it is important to point out that the basis for selecting the genre was not on a preconceived need for students to develop a repertoire of self-righteous expressions. Spanish-speaking parents use regularly and freely the didactic devices inherent in the Spanish language as a means by which to inculcate values in their children such as dichos or proverbs. The ethnographic research of Delgado-Gaitán (1990) verifies the rich repertoire in the discourse used by predominantly Spanish-speaking Mexican American families. The students' self-edification incorporated in writing their own fables adds a plausible dimension of self-control that is empowering to young students who may

feel stifled by the external forces of the social, economic, and linguistic barriers.

The Use of Fables and the Sociocultural Context

To study the educational issues that consistently point to the pervasive academic failure among Hispanic students as a group requires a socio-political/cultural framework. The fable writing project directly and indirectly addresses some of the issues in this framework.

The collective voices of students and their families who are underrepresented and even marginalized within the social and political fabric of our society are arguably silenced against the backdrop of a dominant, oppressive ideology that persistently maintains the status quo. Young students may not be totally aware of the political and social climate of our society, yet many realize very early in their lives the economic and social position of their families and that their ethnicity (their skin color, language, and culture) plays a causal role in the situation.

Since fables are often expressed orally, the use of dialogue is a natural accompaniment to the actual writing activity. In writing fables, children create conflicts or tensions in their characters and offer a resolution in form of a lesson. This context opens an opportunity for dialogic discourse that Freire (1970) describes as a basis for problem setting and solving, an activity that frames critical pedagogy. For example, in unpacking the conflicts of a pig's dilemma over staying away from sweets in the fable, "El cochinito," (Lobel, 1992), the discussion led to the

problems inherent in other kinds of addictions such as those found in drug and alcohol.

As a result of engaging in a large group dialogue with the students, yet another venue for dialogue opened up--between the teacher and me. In other words, the dialogue continued between both of us, that led to conversations about the students, their stressful lives, their families, the curriculum, etc. Our conversations were centered around the need to shape the curriculum or adapt it to make it more responsive to the students. This is a pattern that was repeated in almost every Fable Writing Project classroom.

The Fable Writing Project proved to be invaluable in providing students with outlets for creative, self-edifying expressions that facilitated their self-empowerment process.

The Role of the Teacher

However unique and beneficial the Fable Writing Project is for students, the inherent potential of this activity and other similar ones is realized in great part by the classroom teacher. A teacher's awareness of the political and social functions of schools and their role in this process is an important step and pivotal to the his/her curriculum decision making tasks. Central to understanding the role of schools in our society is that the educational institutions primarily have a self-serving function that is integral to the philosophy and structure of the dominant ideology. Within this context teachers must position themselves as members of a system as well as professionals whose charge is to

Within this paradigm, teachers who are unaware may unwittingly convey to students in subtle but powerful ways that their native language is inferior to the dominant language.

educate students, to prepare them to lead fulfilling lives, to facilitate in her/his students' the development of all of their positive and productive qualities and strengthen their secondary attributes. It is a task of immense proportions, a balancing act, a formidable challenge.

Yet another productive perspective considers the historical function of the school. As stalwart institutions, schools symbolize freedom, truth and liberation. Within a democratic idealism and as a result of success stories from the Civil Rights movement, schools are viewed as venues for realizing visions of change and liberation. Teachers have the prerogative of aligning themselves with this perspective, taking on active role of becoming acutely aware of the political, social, historical context of education in our society, and accordingly, guide students along the pathways of overcoming oppressive states. The enlightened teacher frames a curriculum along the needs of the students, resulting in a design that is more purposeful and responsive.

The Role of the Native and Target Language

Language is a powerful mediator at the teacher's disposal. Bahktin's (1981) explications of the dialogical nature of communication reminds us of how utterances form a nexus of social

and political overtones. Within this paradigm, teachers who are unaware may unwittingly convey to students in subtle but powerful ways that their native language is inferior to the dominant language. But the overwhelming connotations incline the student to perceive their culture, self-esteem, family, etc., of less importance and valuable. Whether teachers realize it or not, their utterances reverberate with references to the structure of power and domination. Even the stylistic switching of language codes by a teacher may convey underlying meanings laden with social and political messages.

The interconnections that teachers have with the classroom, the school in general and society can be examined through Foucault's (Sarup, 1993) views on expressions of power. In Foucault's terms, power is manifested in some way in every relationship. The presence of power may be so saturated within an individual's nexus that he/she may not be aware of it. Generally, every individual is constituted by networks of relations that are integrally part of the culture. Expressions of power emanate from socially constituted orientations, i.e., language, mores, customs, etc. and an entrenched member of the culture systematically acts to sustain the network, even actively partake in the process of social reproductions. Foucault's

ideas have far-reaching implications that address the sustenance of the school culture even when the practices are insidiously ill-fated and damaging to the students.

Helping students write their original fables in their native language provides a powerful model of sociocultural and political dimensions. The interactive dynamism revealed through dialogue where language is a deliberate mediator, and the social, political content within a literary context projects an alternative vision of a highly charged curriculum that is multidimensional in responding to the needs of the students it purports to serve.

The Funds of Knowledge for Teaching Project

A brief description of the goals and procedures of the Funds of Knowledge for Teaching is included in Leslie Patterson's article (this volume), as well as in the feature articles written by the teacher researchers. However, I would like to share a few relevant details about the research collaborative and its role in the inquiry, reflection, and voice process.

Immanent in the Funds of Knowledge for Teaching are two propositions that are crucial to change in today's educational reform efforts. First of all, it is a viable alternative to traditional parental involvement models where teachers assume that they have the knowledge and expertise in educating children and parents are to follow along in supportive roles. Secondly, the Funds project allows teachers to acquire critical knowledge beyond the school that directly

In providing both leadership and support, it is essential that we learn along with teachers, and perhaps, learn how to learn from them.

affects the way they perceive their role as teachers and as curriculum planners. The benefits of engaging in a Funds of Knowledge project with colleagues and teachers seemed expansive or far-reaching and relevant, thus satisfying two important points in the criteria for selecting collaborative research projects. When funds to pay teachers for their participating in the project became available, my colleagues and I embarked in a joint venture that proved to be exciting, interesting, and rewarding albeit time-consuming. The four university professors selected two teachers each to coach, providing technical assistance some of the time, and moral support all of the time, culminating with the development of research reports that are included in this volume of *Discovering Our Experiences*. In hindsight, the initial phase of this collaborative has come into clearer focus as the first step; its fruits of labor have revealed other endless possibilities that we have yet to develop into an action plan. I suspect that we will engage in sustained dialogue over what we've learned from the collaboratives for quite some time to come. There have been discussions, however, on the future development of materials and training strategies in which to disseminate what we've learned about the Funds of

Knowledge for Teaching to other teachers.

Teachers' Voices as the Guiding Beacon

The extent to which we succeed in our collaboration with teachers lies in the perspective that we develop in learning from the participating teachers. In providing both leadership and support, it is essential that we learn along with teachers, and perhaps, learn how to learn from them. We need to be effective in working with them as we collect key data that reveal as much about themselves as about their emerging understandings and perspectives. Central to gaining insight and thus, greater results within a collaborative, is the role of the university researcher.

As I perceive it the role of the university researcher/collaborator is primarily that of a mediator. There is no distinction in terms of leading; each player assumes both the role of leader and follower. Rather what takes precedence is the task at hand, constructing knowledge and generating genuine dialogue. The research project takes center stage, and the collaborators find a stable medium by which to work in tandem, and individually. The only clear delineation of roles is in determining who assumes the authorial voice. But by using the narrative approach as part of reporting the research, the collective voices emerge, not just the author's. Bateson's (1982) analysis of double description, i.e., viewing phenomenon from several points of views, serves as a framework for generating multiple voices and incorporating them within narratives. In the teacher narra-

tives generated as a result of their participation in the collaborative projects, we have discovered their self-transformations which tend to have an enormous impact on not only their work, but their personal lives as well. We are as equally impressed with the participating teachers' perception of themselves as change agents, having made decisions to alter their views and/or strategies for implementation of their curriculum. We are also enthralled with the development of their relationships with parents in more substantive ways as a result of their involvement with the collaborative. We are particularly interested in how participating teachers, can impact other teachers and create a domino effect that can result in greater participation in action research projects by other teachers and university personnel. This idea brings us to the final topic of my discussion, i.e., the role of "voice" in the inquiry/reflective process.

Greater Voice, Greater Participation

As a result of the published papers presented in this volume, other teachers or practitioners will have access to the results of the teacher researchers' inquiry/reflection processes. Even though each of the narratives portray a unique story, as a collective, the narratives convey to the reader the prototype voice of the teacher, one that can speak to the majority of teachers. Indeed, perhaps, the strength of the teachers' voices lie in their ability to inform their peers in a relevant and convincing manner. In narratives such as these, teachers voices focus on a

common theme but relay their ideas or experiences in a variety of ways. Thus, a collective can speak to a wider audience in a more profound way than can a single voice and in the process convey a convincing representation of the ethnographic profile

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inherent in their narratives. Within a collective, the authorial voice is represented as part of the collective, thus forfeiting the tendency of one person(s) monopolizing the group.

The spiraling pathway of the inquiry/reflective/voice process relies on the expression of voice to continue or heighten the ensuing dialogue among interested practitioners. Additionally, collective teacher researcher narratives can be tapped as sources for the study of grounded theories, or recurring practicing principles and organizing frameworks.

Thus, venues for teacher researchers to find their voice, i.e., communicate their findings, ideas, and for problem-posing and solving are essential in the inquiry/reflective process. This volume of *Discovering Our Experiences* serves as a springboard to facilitate teacher researchers in their quest to

transform themselves and serve as catalyst for the much needed change in our schools.

Conclusion

The development of teacher research collaboratives allow the university researchers and teachers to work together in addressing critical educational issues. However, once the initial formation of the collaborative is established, a system of participatory balance must be developed. In essence, a new network within an established system is created and therein lies a possibility for extension of the research collaborative model.

The work represented in this volume is far from complete. There is a dire need to involve more practitioners in the inquiry/reflective/voice process, as well as to improve the linking and helping strategies to do a better job in facilitating teacher researchers. We need to allow teachers more flexibility in selecting their own research agendas so that they will pursue their own specific interests and fulfill their personal and professional goals.

The general sentiment among the teacher researchers who participated in the collaboratives discussed in this volume is that the work must continue because it is perhaps the most powerful way to investigate ones own work and even so, enjoy each other's company.

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