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**A LITERACY JOURNEY OF EMPOWERMENT
FOR ADULT HISPANIC STUDENTS
IN A COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S LEARNING CENTER**

**A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino**

**In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Masters of Arts
in
Education: Reading Option**

**by
Cecilia Torres Best
June 1996**

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to create a literacy curriculum for the empowerment of adult Hispanic students in a community college's learning center, as well as to explore why adult Hispanic students traditionally fail to gain literacy and empowerment while their mainstream counterparts learn literacy. Thus, this project examines old curriculums, misperceptions, and injustices in the school. As such, this project focuses on the traditional curriculum of skills and drills, which emphasizes not only white middle-class theories, knowledge, and practices but also the skills and drills that have failed to bring Hispanics literacy or empowerment. Similarly, this project examines alternative curriculums that empower. Consequently, this project sanctifies not only successful skills and strategies but also the cultural foundations of education and the politics of schooling. As such, this project explores the power of whole language. For example, in whole language, students learn skills and strategies, read real literature, and are assessed instead of evaluated. Moreover, in critical literacy, reading is taught not only to gain literacy but also for students to gain insight into the world, as well as to solve personal, social, and political problems. In addition, this project explores not only the bicultural nature of students but also the curriculums that reflect a concern for both literacy and culture. For example, in English-as-a-second-language (ESL) curriculums, Hispanic students learn literacy by using their own cultural beliefs, attitudes, and experiences for literacy. Thus, minority students learn how to be themselves, bicultural and proud, instead of "white" or someone else. For example, students in ESL classes learn quickly by listening to and speaking in real-life conversations. In safe and nurturing environments, Hispanic students

also form equal relationships or gain ownership of their own literacy. Furthermore, because all curriculums are journeys, my project chronicles my journey into curriculum-making. Thus, in a community college's learning center, I note the changes that occurred when my colleagues and I risked the same old skills and drill curriculum for one that would empower. Thus, in weekly meetings, my colleagues and I examined the hub of all curriculums, the attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge that guide curricular and instructional decision-making. In dialogue, the staff agreed that Hispanic students require more than skills and drills. In reflection, we also decided upon a curriculum that would respond to students' personal, social, and political needs. Thus the staff discussed not only alternative theories and textbooks but also new instructional practices, evaluations, and assessments. As such, we explored the misperceptions of educators who view second language learners from a mainstream point of view. Consequently, some hard-working Hispanic students are mislabeled "lazy" or "remedial." In reality, however, Hispanic students need more time than mainstream students to learn English in stages, as well as with large amounts of language input. Similarly, in ownership, we recognized the importance of skills for students who do not have them, as well as the power of strategies for students who read real literature or write from their own experiences. In support of students, we also identified the role of self-esteem and identity in literacy and empowerment. Finally, in a literacy curriculum of empowerment, we placed our attitudes and beliefs about literacy into practice. As a personal literacy journey, this curriculum continues to grown and evolve.

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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

When minority students attend adult literacy classes, they do so in order to gain a part of the American dream. As silent voices in America, adult minority students trust that learning American English will help them speak not only to their children's teachers but also to hold jobs and participate in the governing of their communities. Nevertheless, such trust in higher education is not always warranted when traditional schools deny that not all students are the same and may require, as a result of their multiethnic backgrounds, different roads to literacy. Consequently, adult schools that teach skills and drills, as well as reflect only the traditional culture, language, and practices of mainstream Americans not only contribute to the low literacy rates of minority students but also to their disempowerment. However, according to Freire (1991), a Brazilian educator and political reformer, exchanging old attitudes, beliefs, and practices for those that empower is a "task for radicals." Thus, in a curriculum for literacy and empowerment, teachers create curriculum not only to teach literacy but also to challenge the status quo by sanctifying the cultural and political foundations of the curriculum. As curriculum-makers, teachers who risk the old patterns of instruction empower not only themselves but also their students.

Because only teachers who take ownership of their curriculum empower, the purpose of a literacy curriculum for minority students is two-fold. First is to provide teachers with the knowledge, beliefs, skills, and practices that will guide them to a curriculum of literacy. The second is to provide a means for empowering adult Hispanic students, who form not only one of the largest school populations but also one of the largest political forces advocating a curriculum for change. Moreover, as a theoretical framework for empowerment, the new curriculum reflects not only the whole language approaches to literacy

but also the theories and practices of human liberation, which go beyond the mere reading of words and result in the social and political empowerment of people.

A History of Discrimination

In the classrooms of the past, traditional educators have repressed, ignored, tolerated, and blamed both minority adults and their children for having failed to achieve a higher literacy rate. Armed with the knowledge that traditional education had served mainstream students well, educators sought to eliminate the culture and language of minorities in favor of English only. However, such practices not only raised questions of racial and ethnic prejudice but also resulted in the disempowerment of minority students. Today studies acknowledge that low achievement by minority students lies not within the students themselves but within the traditional beliefs and practices of America's schools (Crawford, 1991).

For example, in myth, newly arrived immigrant succeeded without special programs; blended into the "melting pot" gladly; and willingly struggled to learn the language of their new country (Freire, 1991). Similarly, in the land of the free, human rights were honored; educational equality extended to all; and opportunities for success were for anyone willing to work. In reality, however, assimilation has been neither simple nor complete. By having accepted the "melting pot" theory as fact, Crawford (1991) claims, Americans have failed to acknowledge their rich diversity of culture and language. Similarly, in 1664, 18 languages were spoken on Manhattan Island, not including the Indian tongues. By the 17th century, not only English but also German, Dutch, French, Swedish, and Polish were common in the 13 colonies. By the mid-1800s, German schools existed in Baltimore, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. Of even more

significance, wherever Italian, Polish, or Czech immigrants had political power, children of the culturally diverse happily received instruction in two languages. However, by the 19th century, established Americans associated “Americanism” with English only. Crawford (1991) claims xenophobia grew as Italians, Jews, and Slavs began to outnumber the Irish, Germans, and Scandinavians. By 1917, laws were passed that forbid American school children to speak their native languages. Consequently, by the late 1930s, bilingual instruction was all but eliminated.

Practicing language and cultural discrimination, however, did little to empower minorities. For example, as a result of an 1818 treaty with the U.S. government, the Cherokee Indians in Oklahoma retained not only the right to speak their mother tongue but also the right to publish the Cherokee Phoenix, the first newspaper in Indian tongue on a reservation (Crawford, 1991). As a result of their native language freedom, the tribe also established 21 schools with a 90 percent literacy rate.

By the late 1800s, what was given was also taken away. In the schools of the reservation, Indian children were ordered to speak English only. In 1879, children were forced to attend off-reservation boarding schools; native religious ceremonies were outlawed; and hair braids for men were forbidden. Finally, the tribal printing press was confiscated. By 1969, only 40 percent of the adults in the tribe were still functionally literate (Crawford, 1991).

With the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, the journey to social change, human liberation, and the educational rights of the culturally diverse began. In 1970, Edward Steinman, a San Francisco poverty lawyer, filed a class action suit in behalf of second language learners after discovering that a client’s child was failing in school because he did not understand English, the

language of instruction. In Lau v. Nichols, Steinman professed that minority children were being denied “education on equal terms,” the high court’s standard in Brown v. Board of Education, because the children did not understand English. In San Francisco, officials answered that, unlike the 1954 Brown case, Lau involved no discrimination because segregation was not present. Although Federal district and appeals courts agreed with school representatives, Judge Shirley Hufstедler of the 9th Circuit disagreed:

These Chinese children are not separated from their English-speaking classmates by state-erected walls of brick and mortar, but the language barrier, which the state helps to maintain, insulates the children from their classmates as effectively as any physical bulwarks. Indeed, these children are more isolated from equal educational opportunity than were those physically segregated Blacks in Brown....” (Crawford, 1991).

In 1974 the Supreme Court overruled the lower court. “There is no equality of treatment,” wrote Justice William O. Douglas, “merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.”

Regardless of progress in some areas, in the decades that followed, second-language learners continued to be blamed for low literacy rates. Because “melting pot” mythology implies that minorities who work hard learn English, students who failed to achieve literacy were labeled lazy or inferior. However, studies reveal that minority students succeed or fail in the classroom partly as a result of their minority histories (Ogbu, 1991). For example, in America, autonomous minorities, such as Jews and Mormons, are minorities only in the numerical sense. Thus, autonomous minorities are free from the learning problems of other minority groups, such as Black Americans. On the

other hand, Ogbu contends (1991), voluntary minorities, who willingly immigrate for economic or political benefit, often experience temporary learning problems as a result of adjustments to a new culture and language. Yet, involuntary minorities, such as Mexican-Americans, are victims of oppression long after their forefathers' slavery or captivity. Thus, involuntary minorities suffer lingering and persistent learning problems.

Similarly, in the classroom, learning is influenced not only by minority histories but also by the cultural differences, which reflect the relationships between minority and dominant groups. For example, in America, the Punjabi Indians display only primary cultural differences, which existed prior to their coming to America. In India, the Punjabi Indians of California spoke Punjabi, arranged marriages, and wore turbans. Consequently, these cultural differences are reflected in America. Like voluntary minorities, such as the Punjabi Indians, involuntary minorities also display primary cultural differences. (Ogbu, 1991). However, as a result of their imposed subordination, involuntary minorities develop secondary differences in opposition to White practices and influence classroom learning. For example, in order to distinguish themselves from the White culture, some Chicano students adopt styles of walking and talking that are in marked contrast to those in the mainstream. However, because voluntary minorities are free from the oppression experienced by involuntary minorities, voluntary minorities adapt more easily to their new country. By using "accommodation without assimilation" (Ogbu, 1991), voluntary minorities achieve higher literacy by playing by the schools' rules without giving up their cultural identity.

To achieve literacy for involuntary minorities, Ogbu (1991) suggests several steps. Teachers should acknowledge that frames of reference for

involuntary minority students may be opposite to those of the mainstream. Secondly, claims Ogbu, in order to understand the process of minority schooling, teachers must also study the histories and cultural adaptations of the culturally diverse. When teachers increase their knowledge of minorities, argues Ogbu, programs can be developed to help involuntary minorities recognize the differences between successful attitudes and actions and those which lead to "acting White." For example, by teaching involuntary minorities the strategy of "accommodation without assimilation," teachers can provide the means for involuntary minorities to participate in two cultures, two languages, and empowerment.

Other models for literacy and empowerment are provided by Freire (1991), the Brazilian educator who developed a methodology for literacy in Latin America. Observing that the ignorance of peasants is the result of economic, social, and political repression, Freire, still blames schools for denying the peasants the means for developing the critical awareness necessary to transform their repression. According to Freire, real empowerment occurs when students and teachers engage in real dialogue, which addresses not only the students' worldly problems but also the students' need to transform their injustices. For example, during the agrarian reform in Chili, peasants in the literacy programs wrote words with their tools on the dirt road they were working. In fact, Freire claims that the workers were not only practicing literacy but also starting to understand their role in the world. When one of the "sowers of words" was asked why he did not learn to read and write prior to the agrarian reform, he said, "I didn't even think....We only had to carry out orders." One peasant explained that only when he became responsible for repairing tools, did he realize the need to read and write.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

In practice, all teachers have beliefs, values, and knowledge that influence literacy and, therefore, deem them political. For based on their ideas of teaching, educators foster relationships in the classroom, initiate dialogue with outside authorities, and ponder formal knowledge (Shor, 1992). Similarly, because students learn only the content, text, and practices provided by the teacher, students learn only what the teacher acknowledges. Moreover, because subject matter is based on the teacher's philosophy of teaching and learning, argues Shor, the choice of subject matter cannot be neutral. What texts are included and which are left out? Does the curriculum present only the traditional beliefs and practices of mainstream students or is it multicultural and balanced? In addition, politics in the classroom can be heard through dialogues. How much open conversations are there between teachers and students? Do they speak to each other as equals or are conversations a one-way transfer of information from teachers to students? Thus, Shor declares, teachers have the ability to empower students through content, text, and practices. However, it is the students themselves who decide if they will participate in the curriculum, as well as to what extent they will allow the curriculum to form them.

For example, in the traditional classroom, where teachers "know best," power remains in the hands of those who teach. Thus, teachers make all the decisions on what to teach, when to teach it, and why it is taught. Students have only to listen to the expertise of the teachers. However, because students are rarely asked to contribute their thoughts, beliefs, and experiences, students not only lose interest but also fail to develop higher literacy. Moreover, when students' voices are silenced, teachers lose valuable opportunities to profit from

students' experiences and knowledge. Because the traditional classroom is ethnocentric, only the voices of America's mainstream are heard. However, such one-sided practices result not only in lost opportunities for a democratic society but also in the disempowerment of minority students. By reflecting only the beliefs, culture, and language of mainstream Americans, the traditional curriculum maintains not only unequal power relationships between dominant and subordinate groups but also denies minority students their cultural heritage and identity. Consequently, in a curriculum that values subject matter over students, as well as favors mainstream Americans over minorities, ethnic students often decide not only to reject the usual skills and drills but also a literacy curriculum that fails to meet their needs for empowerment.

Yet, in a literacy curriculum for the empowerment of adult students, Hispanics start not only by using their own attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge for literacy but also to increase their self-esteem and identity. As experts in their own lives, students use their background experiences to enrich themselves, their communities, and the world. Similarly, as students in need of social and political justice, Hispanic students read the word in order to read the world. For example, in class, students learn not only how to voice their beliefs, trust their opinions, and gain knowledge from classroom practices but also how to solve personal, social, and political problems. Thus, Hispanic students are empowered by literature that mirrors their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as literature that helps them gain strategies for empowerment. As such, empowering teachers recognize that students are powerless to gain literacy without a fair and equitable curriculum. Empowering teachers are also eager to recognize not only the role of culture in empowerment but also the role of whole language in literacy. Nevertheless, literacy and empowerment does not

come as a result of ignoring American culture or standard English, the language of power. As teachers of both literacy and empowerment, teachers seek English excellence, as well as the skills and strategies necessary for students to speak in their own behalf or hold well-paying jobs. For teachers that empower, school "as usual" is suspended in order to risk literacy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For adult minority students, the struggle for literacy begins long before they enter the classroom. With difficult economic, political, and social realities in their communities, ethnic minority students struggle not only to learn literacy but also to change that which oppresses them. Consequently, for minority students, literacy is more than reading the word. A journey for personal, social, and political empowerment, minority students read in the classroom only in order to later gain meaning in their world (Freire, 1991). Still, in order for minority students to receive literacy and empowerment, teachers must first ask themselves, "What kind of schooling will develop active readers, good workers, and concerned citizens? Will it be the skills and drills that has failed minority students in the past or will it be a just curriculum where Hispanics can succeed at the same level as mainstream students?" Thus, in the search for an adult literacy curriculum of empowerment, teachers must first explore the past, inquire about the future, pose problems, and reflect on solutions before creating new roads to literacy. In their own personal search for meaning, teachers risk change in order not only to empower but to be empowered.

This literature review explores the realities of the curriculum. In particular, this review examines not only the strengths and weaknesses of traditional theories and practices, such as skills and drills, but also the negative effects of traditional schooling when it recognizes only "white" culture. As such, this review acknowledges the cultural foundations of schools, which serve as a basis for student' empowerment by confirming the knowledge, beliefs, and experiences of students. Thus, a general theme for this project is that traditional schools disempower. As cultural "gatekeepers," traditional schools deny adult minorities not only the building blocks of learning, self-esteem and

identity, but also the skills of language. For example, in some traditional schools, teachers believe that minority students who speak with an accent fail to master English. Other traditional teachers believe that students who fail to raise their hands in class are students who fail to show interest instead of students who are steeped in a different culture. Similarly, this review recognizes that as a result of unquestioned paradigms, minority students fail to gain literacy. In unequal relationships, teachers dispense all the knowledge and retain all the power while students in need of empowerment do as they are told, read and write passively, and fail to develop literacy. Moreover, this project defines literacy as more than the theories, skills, and strategies of reading and writing. As a means to a better life, literacy allows students to read the word in order for them to speak to their children's teachers, gain jobs, or win seats on the city council. Consequently, learning to read is more than phonics. As strategies for self-empowerment, students learn how to turn in assignments, how to "assimilate" without being "white," or how to change the "learned helplessness" of the past. As such, this review explores curriculums for adult minority students. For example, as the first curriculum based on minority culture and language, bilingual education gave students the opportunity to learn in their own language with a voice of their own. Still, today minority voices in the classroom are not guaranteed. As a backlash to bilingual education, cultural diversity, and the growing number of immigrants in America, many American schools embraced "English only" and a back-to-basics curricula meant to quiet voices. Still, in a democratic society, the attempt to gain literacy and empowerment for all students continues. With new theories, purposes, and practices, such as whole language, new curriculums of empowerment emerge with hope for the future. Some curriculums view their subject matter from a

student-centered viewpoint instead of from a subject-centered viewpoint. Yet, others consider the culture of all students instead of only the culture of the mainstream. In a safe and nourishing environment, others teach literacy as a means for personal empowerment. As critical classroom experiences, empowering curriculums today are more than reading as phonics or one culture for all students. The basis for all empowering curriculums, however, is the teacher's courage to question the status quo: How do students learn? How should they be assessed? and what skills and strategies bring students not only literacy but also empowerment? Thus, teachers who empower their students, take risks, accept conflict, and explore choices in order to take ownership of their curriculum.

The Cultural Foundations of Education

The Nature of Schooling. For a nation founded on democracy and freedom, as well as equal opportunities for all, American schools have consistently found African Americans, Latinos, Mexican Americans, and Native Americans on the bottom of the educational, social, and economic scale (Bartoli, 1995). Hidden by class and cultural barriers, minority students experience a greater risk for school retention, dropout, and literacy failure. Moreover, Bartoli claims that minority children and their parents endure not only increasing childhood and adolescent depression but also alienation and despair. Truly "a nation at risk," claims Bartoli, America must change the unequal opportunities of minority children and look at the complex social nature in which they occur.

Knowledge as Power. Furthermore, Shor (1992) claims that schools, in addition to transferring knowledge, are just as likely to contend for power. As Galileo discovered in his conflicts with the Vatican and as slaves in the

American South understood when reading and writing for slaves was outlawed, knowledge is not neutral. Moreover, because some groups have power to establish knowledge and others do not, argues Shor, school canons, which often guide curriculum and instruction, require questioning and critical study.

Cultural Teachings. In addition, Pi (1994) argues that, like the transferring of knowledge and power, schools also transfer the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the predominant society. Through everyday learning activities, schools sanction only the values of mainstream America while avoiding the values of those in the minority. However, according to Pi, some educators believe that schools should teach not only the values of the majority but also the values of the minority, who are in need of transformation and empowerment. For example, because schools reflect the puritan morality of its early settlers, students learn the values of respectability, self-denial, and duty. However, when schools teach the American work ethic, which dictates that all who work hard succeed and all who fail are lazy, students mistakenly learn that failure is in their own making, instead of in other factors, such as the culture of schooling. Moreover, claims Pi, the belief in the superiority of one's own culture, as well as the negation of the culture of others, leads people in power to believe that minority values are not only inferior but also in need of reforming.

The "Hidden" Curriculum. Similarly, it is in the nature of schools to have not only an "official" curriculum with stated goals and objectives but also a "hidden" curriculum with which learners are socialized. As an indirect means of helping students learn the norms and values of society, the hidden curriculum rewards certain behaviors, such as turning in assignments, expressing one's opinions, and participating in class projects. However, claims Pi, instructors apply the hidden curriculum differently according to the students' social class

status. For example, upper class children are more likely to be taught self-control, leadership, and creativity than lower class children who are taught to respect authority, comply with instructions, and conform to dominant norms.

Unequal Benefits. Finally, Shannon (1990) claims that it is in the nature of schools to distribute their benefits unequally among students. Consequently, schools are less responsive to the needs of the poor and racial minorities than they are to the wealthy and white. Moreover, because school teachers are largely from a different race and social class than their minority students, teachers often encourage students to stay silent on topics, such as equality and justice in America.

Cultural “Gate Keeping”

Keeping Schools “American”. According to Au (1994), low literacy rates by minority students are a result not only of class or socioeconomic status but also a result of the inequities in American classrooms that have traditionally refused to recognize the wide cultural diversity of its students. However, Au claims that culturally diverse students are easily distinguishable by their ethnicity, social class, history, and language. Moreover, even though members of the mainstream culture identify the culturally diverse only as members of a group, such as African American or Asian American, minority students usually speak of themselves as Vietnamese, Puerto Rican, or Navajo.

Recognizing Diversity. Acknowledging cultural diversity, claims Wallerstein (1983), requires teachers not only to remember their students’ histories but also to verify their bilingual heritage. For example, until the U.S. annexation of the Southwest in 1848, the Southwest belonged to Mexico. Under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexicans were granted U.S. citizenship, as well as guaranteed that the Southwest itself would remain

bilingual and bicultural. However, according to Wallerstein, states have denied Chicano children not only the right to speak Spanish but also the right to attend school in clothing worn predominantly by minority students. Ironically, notes Wallerstein, the non-English speaking descendants of yesterday's immigrants are today regarded as aliens.

Cultural Identities. Moreover, in addition to acknowledging the cultural diversity of students, Feldman (1991) contends that schools need to verify the influence of culture in schooling and learning. Studies reveal that minority students, like their European counterparts, choose attitudes and behaviors in line with their cultural backgrounds. Consequently, as minority students develop cultural identities, they are able to answer the question, "How should a person with my ethnicity interpret and behave in the world?" However, Feldman argues that if students from a minority group experience a cultural mismatch between their cultural identities and the schools' practices, ethnic minorities must either adopt the school's view, and risk a poor cultural identity, or else resist literacy, and risk school failure. For example, in some minority cultures, students are discouraged from accepting assistance from others as part of their cultural heritage. As a result, minority students in need of assistance may resist help and experience literacy failure.

Unequal Power Relationships. In addition to culture as a factor in learning, the teaching of unequal power relationships also influences the literacy success or failure of minority students. According to Au (1994), minority students fail to gain literacy at a higher rate than their mainstream counterparts as a result of their subordination to dominant mainstream groups. At fault, claims Au, are the familiar old patterns of instruction that encourage minority students to be passive instead of active participants in their own literacy.

Culture, Politics, and the Curriculum. Moreover, unequal power relations based on the culture of white middle-class students lead to unequal but powerful curriculums, which are reflected not only in old patterns of instruction but also in the student's inability to ask why and learn. Thus, with the power to dictate what will be taught and how to teach it, all curriculums, according to Shor (1992), are political. However, Shor also confirms that a curriculum that allows questioning, encourages critical thoughts, examines school learning, and reflects on the restrictions of society is no more political than the curriculum which teaches students that knowledge is complete. Similarly, Freire (1993) contends that when students are told what to do, when to do it, and what it means, students lose the power to direct their own lives and learn only to passively obey rules. Consequently, students must direct their own learning.

Questioning Paradigms

Culture, Learning, and Literacy. As social creations, there is nothing "natural" about educational settings or practices. Therefore, according to Mull (1990), educational practices, such as teaching only the culture and language of mainstream Americans, can be changed through the use of social and cultural resources. Moreover, according to Au (1993), minority students fail to gain literacy as a result of the school's failure to acknowledge their native cultures, to build upon their interfactional styles, or to use the language with which minority students are already familiar. Thus, Au claims that when schools discount the language abilities of minority students, as well as fail to capitalize on their native language skills, minority students lose literacy and empowerment.

Whole Language Theory. Furthermore, in opposition to traditional theory that claims learning to read is learning to sound out syllables and words, whole

language advocates, such as Weaver (1988), claim that meaning is lost when reading is viewed as part to whole. Consequently, students who focus on sounding out words lose literacy. In contrast, students who experience literacy as whole language focus on reading and writing whole texts for meaning. Functional, relevant, and meaningful, the whole language approach to literacy not only avoids reducing reading and writing into skills but also encourages students to read in social contexts, actively learning how to use language with others in order to make sense and create meaning.

Redefining Literacy. Moreover, Smith (1985) claims that in order to gain meaning, readers must first transact with the text. More than reading letters and words on a page, readers must use their theory of the world, which all people create, carry around in their heads, and test through their daily interactions with the world. Consequently, as knowledge, the readers' theory of the world is the source of readers' predictions and enables readers to make sense of events and language, as well as to test the hypotheses that result in learning. According to Smith, if readers cannot relate their readings to their theory of the world, there is no comprehension and learning.

Reading the Word and the World. Finally, Freire (1985) argues that learners gain literacy by participating in learning activities that reflect their interests and needs. Consequently, in the process of reading, minority students gain not only meaning but also the practices and knowledge they need to liberate them from the forces that oppress them. For example, Freire argues that since language is impossible without thought and thought is impossible without the world, literacy is more than syllables, words, and phrases. As word-and-action, literacy includes the relationships of humans and their world. Consequently, learning to read and write is not only the right to speak one's

thoughts but also the right to create, decide, and choose to participate in one's own destiny. However, because illiterates do not know that actions transform, claims Freire, students must engage in true dialogue, reflection, and action. Only then, declares Freire, will learners recognize a right even greater than literacy: the right to have a voice.

Cultural Equality

The Right to be Heard. The right for minority children with limited English skills to speak and be heard began in 1968 when President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Bilingual Education Act into law (Crawford, 1991). Through Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the government promised to provide not only educational programs but also to train educators and develop text. In spite of its name, the Bilingual Education Act originally did not require schools to use two languages in order to receive funding. Nevertheless, the use of native language instruction became a reality in the late 1960s when, observes Crawford, the National Education Association drew attention to Tucson, Arizona, and the Mexican-American children that were required to learn English in a language they did not speak nor understand. Thus, as with other ideas whose time had come, the 90th Congress not only introduced thirty-seven bilingual educational bills but, in 1969, also set aside \$7.5 million for bilingual education.

The Politics of Pedagogy. Although bilingual education programs were meant to offer solutions to the language problems of second language learners, it also sparked a controversy regarding the failure of minorities to assimilate in the minds of some mainstream Americans. For example, in Minami and Kennedy (1991), Otheguy claims that with different purposes and goals, bilingual education programs employ practices that both encourage and

discourage assimilation. Moreover, Otheguy notes that as part of a bilingual education program, English as a second language (ESL) encourages assimilation. However, subject-matter instruction in the children's native language encourages pluralism. Furthermore, some bilingual teachers teach in the child's native language while others teach in English. Still other teachers switch back and forth, much as the children themselves do. Thus, claims Otheguy, debates regarding the assimilation or pluralism of minority students should be based on the observation of programs, instead of politics.

English as a Second Language. Moreover, although the Bilingual Education Act provided the right for bilingual children to receive instruction in two languages, schools that have a shortage of bilingual teachers often teach English as a second language (ESL) instead. Thus, minority students receive literacy assistance only through "pullout classes" a few times a week (Crawford, 1991). Throughout the rest of the week, minority children must learn literacy in a language they do not speak, read, or write. Furthermore, while emphasizing old techniques of memorization and drills, traditional ESL grammar-based instruction has continued to limit the literacy rates of minority students. Moreover, earlier ESL approaches, such as the grammar-translation method, which stresses reading and writing skills over listening and speaking, were equally confining. While grammar-based ESL methods produce students who write grammatically correct sentences, Crawford claims they fail to develop good communicators. However, newer communication-based ESL methods are superseding the study of syntax and vocabulary. Thus, grants Crawford, as an approach to meaning-making, the natural approach to ESL emphasizes simple speech, as well as visual and physical cues, in order to help minority students understand a second language in a secure and safe environment.

English Only. Because conservative Americans have continued to perceive a resistance by minorities to the English language and mainstream culture, 16 states since 1988 have adopted English as their official language. For the first time, Congress has also considered a proposal to amend the U.S. Constitution in favor of English only. However, Crawford (1989) claims that if official English laws curb civil rights, English only would be a divisive amendment founded on false assumptions and myths. For example, although English only advocates profess that earlier immigrants learned English without special programs, during the 19th century many states had laws for bilingual education. Still other myths assert that today's minorities are failing to assimilate. The facts, however, show that linguistic assimilation is accelerating with Hispanic newcomers approaching "anglicization" within two generations.

Proposition 63. Furthermore, when Californians voted by a 3-to-1 margin to make English their state's official language, they may not have intended to restrict bilingual education (Crawford, 1991). Nevertheless, Proposition 63 succeeded by making cultural assimilation a primary concern for Americans. Thus, Proposition 63 not only changed the educational terms for second language learners but also, instead of asking what kinds of literacy approaches help limited English proficient children (LEP), educators began looking for ways to teach minority children without their native language and the validation of culture.

Back-to-Basics. As a reaction against the "divisiveness" of cultural diversity, back-to-basics advocates seek to stop not only what they perceive as a growing decline of American schools but also the teaching of cultural diversity. Thus, while citing evidence of the schools' decay, such as low test scores and a high number of remedial courses, back-to-basics advocates

suggest that schools not only return to the traditions of the past but also to the fundamentals, such as grammar, punctuation, and spelling. For example, in Pi (1994), Bloom argues that values and attitudes taught outside the mainstream cause schools to risk the decay of American individualism. Moreover, Bloom claims that the insistence of ethnic minorities to preserve their culture weakens not only the nation's belief in God but also the country that has helped to unify the American people. However, Pi (1994) argues, the question remains as to whether the back-to-basics movement, which fails to address the nature of cultural diversity, will improve the school performance of minorities.

Grading Native Instruction. In addition, in Ovando (1991), Crawford claims that bilingual education should be evaluated on its effectiveness and not on politics. Consequently, Crawford makes the following points while citing the work of Kenji Hakuta and Catherine Snow (1986). The optimum period for children to learn a second language is not necessarily in early childhood. Older children and adults often are better learners. Moreover, although children quickly acquire simple, everyday English in conversations, English for academic success takes much longer. In addition, because skills learned in one language transfer to another, children who speak, read, or write well in their first language will later do better in English. Similarly, reading for at-risk children should first be taught in their native language since native language skills will later transfer into higher achievement in English. Finally, some types of intelligence are enhanced by a child's bilingualism. Consequently, bilingualism should not be viewed as a handicap.

Towards a Just Curriculum

A Balance of Rights. Mull (1990) observes that in Dewey's (1928) vision of literacy people would come to understand the social, political, and moral

circumstances of their lives. Consequently, Dewey advised people to look at their everyday experiences, as well as the historical and social circumstances that are shaped by those experiences. Moreover, Mull claims that Dewey argued that American democracy was at risk when it exaggerated the differences among social classes, physical and mental labor, and the connection between social life and capital accumulation. Moreover, as urban life became more fragmented for the working class, higher status citizens became more politically powerful. Thus, Dewey believed that education should lessen class barriers and reach the democratic ideal through actual experiences in which people would come to understand the social, political, and moral circumstances of their lives.

Powerful Purposes. Consistent with Dewey's view that people learn through experience, whole language educators, Goodman and Goodman (1990), claim that the purpose of schools is to help learners expand on what they know, to build on what they do, and to support students in identifying their needs and interests as they cope with old and new experiences. Consequently, as learners experience what they know in new ways or as starting points to new literacy, learners are capable of learning relatively easily what is relevant and functional for them.

Whole Language Practices. For example, as a model for the whole language curriculum, the authoring cycle allows students to use their own experiences for literacy. Consequently, whole language teachers invite students to take ownership of their literacy by creating their own meanings through reading, writing, music, or art (Harste, Short, and Burke, 1988). Similarly, by starting with the life experiences of students, the authoring cycle allows curriculum to build from and connect with what students know through

uninterrupted learning experiences. Later, students revise, present, and share their meanings with others. Similarly, students not only create meaning but also reflect on their meanings before accepting new learning invitations for real communication, such as writing to a friend. In addition, meaning is created with a variety of texts, such as newspapers or journals in a variety of settings. Moreover, learning activities, according to Harste, Short, and Burke, should encourage transmediation in order to reflect more consciously on meaning. Similarly, students should understand that different tasks have different requirements. For example, rough drafts, may not require capitalization. However, writing letters for real purposes requires sentences to begin with capital letters. Finally, learning tasks should not be made simple. Although it may help students to master rules quickly, it does not help students with the complexities of language outside the classroom.

Owning Literacy. Moreover, because whole language teachers believe that learning language is learning empowerment, students are asked not only to bring their background knowledge and experience to the written text in order to gain meaning but also to experience learning activities gradually and naturally, as well as with real purpose in a minimum of direct instruction. Similarly, in a balance of power, teachers and students negotiate the curriculum. Consequently, unlike teachers in traditional practices, students take ownership of their own literacy while learning the skills and strategies necessary for literacy empowerment. In addition, as learners themselves, teachers develop curriculum by reflecting on what they know about language, students, and patterns that make sense.

Cultural Roots of Curriculum. Furthermore, since students are shaped not only by their everyday experiences but also by their historical and social

circumstances, curricula should reflect the historical, social, and culture circumstances of minorities. (Dewey, 1928). Similarly, Banks (1991) claims that as dispensers of culture and power, a curriculum for adult minority students addresses culture by helping students view ideas, issues, and problems from diverse cultural perspectives. In addition, Giroux (1991) claims that curriculum theory, which has traditionally been defined as the teaching of subjects and experiences for use in the wider society, must recognize that schools not only are instructional sites but also cultural sites that give voice to the histories, cultures, and experiences of all students.

Unequal Power Relationships. For example, Cummins (1989) claims that educational theories have traditionally ignored the role of unequal power relationships between educators and minority students. Consequently, Cummins claims that literacy and empowerment will result only when educators redefine their roles in relationship to the following four important institutional characteristics.

1. Cultural/linguistic incorporation. Because dominated minorities benefit when language and culture are incorporated, teachers who add a second language and culture into the classroom empower more students more than those who subtract the primary language and culture of minority students.
2. Community participation. Moreover, schools empower minority students when the relationship between the school and the community is also empowered. For example, because many minority parents do not speak English, parents are both blamed and excluded from school activities. However, through

intervention, minority students in a Haringey project in Britain not only began reading to their parents on a regular basis but experienced literacy success, even when parents did not understand the language of the school.

3. Pedagogy. Furthermore, claims Cummins, studies have suggested that children who are labeled learning disabled are pedagogically induced by teachers who often confine them to passive and dependent roles. However, teachers who encourage their students to become active in creating their own knowledge, empower their students.

4. Assessment. In addition, historically, the results of psychologists' testing has legitimized the disabling of minority students by locating the "problem" within the students instead of the school itself. However, an alternative role for special educators is one of advocate who locates the "problem" in the standardized testing of students instead.

Liberation of the Oppressed. Similarly, Freire (1991) focuses his approach to adult literacy on experiences that will lead to the liberation of the oppressed from their oppressors. By basing the content of language lessons on the learners' cultures and personal experiences, Freire creates problem-posing experiences in order to help people in the developing world gain literacy in native and second language literacy projects (Spener, 1990). Thus, in dialogue, teachers and students face one another as equals and discuss issues of concern in their own lives. Moreover, in problem-posing, open-ended problems with cultural themes are used with materials to generate discussions. Through the questioning process, claims Spener, students define the real-life

problems, discuss their causes, and propose actions to solve them.

Multicultural Curriculum. Similarly, because a multicultural curriculum not only adds an ethnic perspective to the curriculum but also transforms the content, assumptions, and strategies of traditional models, a multicultural curriculum empowers (Hillis, 1993). However, with no one definition of multiculturalism, four curriculum models clarify the diversity of multicultural choices (Banks, 1991). In the traditional model, teachers select material from a monocultural, Eurocentric perspective. Consequently, only mainstream concepts are presented at the expense of other equally valid cultural views. However, in the ethnic additive model, teachers add ethnic content to the traditional curriculum. The mainstream viewpoint remains the same but teachers supplement the curriculum with ethnic material. In contrast, the multicultural model attempts to transform the curriculum. Thus, the mainstream perspective is only one of many views presented. However, the last step in curriculum transformation, claims Hillis, is the ethno-national model, which seeks to explore ethnic and cultural events from global perspectives.

Different but Equal. Moreover, Ogbu (1992) points to several other multicultural models with different purposes. For example, in multicultural education for cross-cultural understanding, students are taught the right to be different and the need for mutual respect of cultures. In culturally responsive education, however, students at the elementary and secondary school levels learn about minority cultures through the content of the curriculum and as a medium of instruction. Still, in bicultural education, Ogbu notes, minority students learn not only their own cultures, languages, and identities but also the skills and language of the mainstream culture. Moreover, in cultural pluralism, students experience a curriculum which seeks not only to preserve ethnic-group

identity but also to increase the social, political, and economic participation of minority students in society. Finally, claims Ogbu, in multicultural education, students are taught that cultural diversity is a normal human experience in which individuals participate competently in a multicultural society.

Teacher's Choice. Moreover, because teachers either choose to maintain the traditional curriculum, integrate ethnic material, or transform it, teachers own their curriculum. According to Branch, Goodwin, and Gualtieri (1993), Banks identifies four instructional levels at which ethnic content can be integrated into the curriculum. In the contributions approach, the mainstream curriculum acknowledges non mainstream contributions by focusing on topics, such as heroes, holidays, and foods. However, in the additive approach, the content, themes, and perspectives of cultural groups are added to the curriculum without changing its structure. For example, teachers may add a literature study of ethnic minorities within American society. Moreover, in the transformation approach, the structure of the curriculum is changed to include concepts, issues, and events viewed from the perspective of cultural groups. Consequently, strategies may include how current politics affect individual cultures or alternative perspectives to Columbus's discovery of America. Finally, in the social action approach, students make decisions on social issues involving cultural groups and take constructive social action to solve them. For example, students may analyze current textbooks for cultural bias or identify ways in which students can act responsibly for their own lives.

A Model Literacy Curriculum. In addition, in Bilingual/ESL Education (1989), six components of a successful bilingual education and English as a second language (ESL) program, are described, as well as other successful aspects used outside the classroom. First, minority students are introduced to

the school's environment in their native language. However, basic skills and subject content are provided not only in the student's primary language but also in English, using English as a second language methods. Moreover, as part of the total curriculum, the student's history and cultural heritage is addressed in both the student's primary language and English. Other educational practices include using teacher aides, implementing a tutoring program, teaching higher order thinking skills, participating in community enrichment activities, practicing individual instruction, and exercising fair testing and evaluation.

Moreover, in bilingual education, teachers used Montessori/cooperative learning, language experience, individualized instruction, drill and practice, and language development. Methodologies for teaching include natural language, whole language, cooperative learning, total physical response, drill and practice, and "sheltered English". Instructional resources in bilingual education programs, as well as English as a second language, include computers and other educational materials, such as texts and videos. Non instructional support, however, includes counseling, medical, and other community services.

The Experimental Process. Similarly, in a model that reflects a broader curriculum than has been traditional for students enrolled in adult basic education (ABE) or English as a second language (ESL) classes, the Westonka program in Minnesota seeks to help undereducated adults, immigrants, and minorities learn the art of dialogue, public debate, and action while helping them to better understand their roles as citizens. Therefore, in a curriculum that focuses not on skills but on the adult's ability to learn and be empowered (Hurley, 1991), groups of eight to twelve adult minority students not only chose topics that were important to them, such as welfare, drugs, or crime, but also critically discussed them. Moreover, in the learning process, students

not only gain literacy and empowerment but also help the staff expand their concepts of adult learning by including problem-posing, dialogue, and critical thinking as instructional methods for reform.

Critical Classroom Practices

New Perspectives. In Mull (1990), Toffelson claims that, in English as a second language (ESL) classes, most ESL teachers accept the view that learning English will lead to good jobs and respect in the community, rather than the view that English has the power to bar certain groups from economic and social opportunities. Consequently, most second language acquisition (SLA) theories emphasize psychological and social-psychological factors, such as motivation, instead of the links between language learning, power, and dominance. Moreover, Mull claims that activities in ESL/SLA classrooms ignore questions, such as who benefits when language minorities are required to learn English for employment or how ESL methods and materials keep minorities from gaining economic resources and political power. Given the failure of educators to ask such questions, it is not surprising that ESL is often viewed by minorities as agents of sociopolitical domination.

Powerful Inquiry. However, Shannon (1989) asks not only about the causes and consequences of instructional practices that lead to illiteracy and disempowerment but also finds the answer to his questions in the “de-skilling” and “disempowering” of teachers; the influence of “experts,” and the rise of standardized testing, which are unrelated to the critical skills necessary in modern society. For example, Shannon claims that assessment consists of objective tests that take the place of teacher’s professional judgment while alienating teachers, parents, and students. Similarly, Shannon claims that such practices deny teachers the power to exercise their professional responsibility.

Thus, in an act of ownership, teachers should teach students to share the joys of reading, rather than teach the parts of skills, as well as regain the power to evaluate the reading comprehension of their own students. Moreover, Shannon acknowledges the political implications of owning the curriculum. As resistance to traditional practices, students and teachers retake control of their lives, become better informed, more critically aware, and reject the passive roles assigned to them. For Shannon, the key to better pedagogy lies in a teacher's willingness to question the status quo and change from its present form.

Liberatory Whole Language. Moreover, as critical pedagogy and practice, liberatory whole-language bilingual classrooms teach not only primary and secondary languages but also language as a political, economic, and social issue. Consequently, teachers not only know the content of the classroom material but also ask, "Does the content represent only one story?" or "Does the literature translate only Euro-American texts?" Moreover, liberatory whole-language activities involve the community by either bringing the community into the class or designing projects to go out. In addition, liberatory classroom teachers see their role as teaching students to read the world, not just the word. For example, students are taught to read racist or sexist messages in songs. Similarly, in liberatory classrooms, students use language to talk about the current world, their place in it, and their ideas for making it a better world.

The Critical Reading Process. Smith (1985) claims that in order for minority students to become empowered, students must practice to read the world, as well as to read the word. As process, instead of skills, Smith shares five theories which explain how students read. First, in Goodman's

psycholinguistic theory, students use semantics, syntax, graphophonics, and pragmatics to read. As windows to the reading process, miscues are natural as readers use their background knowledge to make predictions, confirm, or disconfirm predictions in meaning. However, in schema theory, cognitive psychologists state that readers use existing knowledge to organize and remember text, as well as to apply new information to old. Similarly, in Rosenblatt's transactional theory, readers use their culture and personal experiences to transact meaning from the text's pages. Readers also create meanings as a result of their background knowledge. Moreover, in Echo's theory, reading is only one way students construct meaning. By using reading or other sign systems, such as music, dance, or drama, readers assign meaning to the graphics on the page in order to understand the written word. Finally in socio-psycholinguistic theory, Smith argues that the more knowledge readers bring to the page, the easier it will be for them to understand. Moreover, Smith points out that learning to read is not learning to sound out words; consequently, even if students pronounce words correctly, they may still not understand text.

The Power of Skills. Still, the literacy process should not ignore the teaching of skills, claims Delpit (1988), since Black and poor students often suffer from the good intentions of "progressive" educators whose educational reforms do not provide students with the skills and knowledge needed to function in the "culture of power". For example, Delpit claims that when teachers imply that it does not matter how students talk, read, or write, it ensures that students will fail. Delpit also suggests that teachers tell students that their language and culture is wonderful but that there is a political power game that they too must play. Moreover, Delpit believes that teachers should

take responsibility for teaching the “codes of power,” such as correct spelling or rules of capitalization in context. To provide students with what they do not already possess is providing them with the culture of power, claims Delpit.

Reading and Writing. Furthermore, in the classroom, learning to read and write requires reciprocal discourse in which minority students interact socially and linguistically in order to gain meaning (Dolly, 1990). As more than reading the word, critical readers can discover that they can question or challenge a text or writer. Moreover, by integrating ESL reading and writing, teachers provide the rich contextualized language activities needed by second language learners. For example, in a dialogue journal, students and teachers participate in an ongoing written conversation with the partners exchanging journals at least once a week. It is the student’s responsibility, however, to start the conversation with teachers helping only by expanding or modifying the topic. Similarly, Hamann, Schultz, Smith, and White (1991) claim that if readers are to have meaningful transactions with literary texts, students must make connections between their lives and literature. Consequently, in his ninth-grade classroom, White (1990) found that when students wrote about relevant personal experiences before reading a literature selection, students offered more meaningful responses, as well as provided better character analyses.

Texts that Disempower. Freire (1985) claims that reading in the classroom requires more than texts that deposit mere words into learners. Contrived and paternalistic, traditional texts have nothing to do with the actual experiences of illiterate learners, claims Freire. Consider the question, “Did Ada give her finger to urubu?” Then consider the answer, “I doubt that Ada gave her finger to the bird!” What real meaning, argues Freire, could such texts

have for people who spend their day working hard or, even worse, without working. Other texts reveal someone else's realities, such as texts that are decorated with smiling couples with fair faces and well-nourished children. According to Freire, such texts cannot offer any positive views to urban workers who need to gain knowledge for their role in the world. Illiterates cannot critically understand their reality through texts in which they are instructed to learn phrases like "the wing of the bird" or "eva saw the grape.

Real Literature. However, when students experience a literature-based approach to reading instruction and whole language, claims Weibel (1994), students gain critical understandings. As a model for adult literacy classrooms and tutoring sessions, the literature-based approach allows students to read from real literature, instead of from traditional readers. Thus, teachers frequently read stories aloud or talk with children about the characters, the events, and the language of the stories. Moreover, teachers base skill-building lessons on the stories by asking children to respond through discussions, drawings, and dramatic presentations. In addition, the whole language approach to reading recognizes that learning to read cannot be separated from listening, speaking, writing, or thinking. Consequently, claims Weibel, in a classroom where literature and whole language are used, students learn not only how to read words but also how to discuss a story's ideas, critique its plot, and understand its characters.

The Literature Cultural Gap. However, according to Barrera (1991), classroom readings from a literature-based curriculum does not guarantee that minority students will receive literature that reflects their cultural backgrounds. For example, many teachers have failed to consider the cultural and social aspects of literature. Consequently, even when school's have a majority of

second language learners, the themes and characters of literature reflect the faces, experiences, and histories of only mainstream students. Similarly, even when multicultural literature is used, the authors and illustrators are mostly from Euro-American background. In addition, teachers assume that students' patterns of communication are not only the same for all students but also that the patterns are the same as the teachers. Consequently, classroom language and literature activities reflect only the school's culture. Moreover, Barrera claims that teachers should not assume that literature-based instruction contains cultural relevance or equity or that literature shortcomings are only confined to content. Touching upon classroom interactional patterns, instructional strategies, and school-community relations, Barrera claims that in order for literature to be relevant, it must be carried out in a more culturally informed and equitable way.

Literacy Strategies. Empowering classroom practices, however, require teachers to arrange, change, and improve the social practices of traditional schooling in order for Latino students to succeed (Mull, 1988). For example, because minority children often come from poor and working-class families, minority students in traditional classrooms primarily do rote work and experience little choice. Moreover, teachers rarely explain why the work is assigned or how the work is related to other assignments. In addition, some studies conclude that minority and poor students receive mostly low-level basic literacy, instead of higher-status knowledge. Similarly, teachers of Latino students often reduce the curriculum's level of complexity. Consequently, Latino students fail to participate in intellectually demanding activities. However, teachers can empower their students by using five successful strategies for literacy teaching. First, teachers of minority students allow their

students to succeed by providing a challenging curriculum. Secondly, successful teachers emphasize the importance of content in teaching. Therefore, teachers stress comprehension, strategies, and inquiry. Moreover, literacy teachers make social arrangements for learning. For example, students experience reading and writing activities in a group and part of a whole, such as dramatizing books or writing in journals. Moreover, students' experiences are used to make sense of class content. Thus, children introduce topics that come from the home or the community. Finally, teachers receive both social and political support. Consequently, teachers not only set up their own classrooms but also choose their own texts and create their own activities.

Assessment. Furthermore, because traditional classroom testing and evaluation have traditionally marginalized culturally diverse students, two new methods of assessment capture the process of meaning-making, instead of the end product. For example, in authentic classroom assessment, teachers develop real-life assessment activities in order to guide student instruction and performance (Garcia, 1994). Strategies include compiling running records, conducting miscue reading analyses, holding student-teacher conferences, and assembling student portfolios. However, if authentic classroom assessment is to be used successfully, claims Garcia, teachers need to receive the necessary knowledge and support to build on students' cultural and linguistic resources. Moreover, performance-based assessment is created by outside educators who attempt to simulate real-world performances in the classroom. Consequently, instead of using standardized tests, assessment activities use the discipline itself for evaluation. For example, in Maryland, eighth grade math students designed a restaurant by adopting the roles of designer, developer, financier, and builder. However, critics warn that if new methods of assessment improve

performance, they will do so by taking account of the needs, talents, and concerns of culturally diverse students, their parents, and communities.

Evaluating the Tests. Moreover, because literacy assessment is the responsibility of the teacher, teachers should judge the merits of a test for second language acquisition (Krashen and Terrill, 1992). Krashen and Terrill cite four criterias by Carroll (1973) on fair assessment. First is relevance, which Carroll refers to as a test that measures the communication skills students need by coordinating what is tested with the course's goals. However, in acceptability, Carroll refers to the willingness of the students to participate in testing, as well as their satisfaction that the test can evaluate their progress. Moreover, in comparability, Carroll refers to the comparing of test scores of different groups or of the same group of students at different times. In economy, Carroll means obtaining large amounts of information in a short period time and without alot of effort by the instructor and students. Moreover, Krashen and Terrell note that in the Natural Approach to listening comprehension, testing in the prespeaking stage should focus on the developing ability of the students to recognize key lexical items and to use content to guess meaning. Similarly, even though speech is a goal in most language courses, Krashen and Terrill note that it is rarely tested directly as a result of the teacher's assumption that students who do well on grammar tests will also be able to speak.

Judging Dialects. Smith claims (1985) that, in some classrooms, the reading comprehension of students' with dialects is often judged by the students' ability to speak the language (Smith, 1985). However, reading aloud is not the same as comprehending the text. Moreover, reading aloud is more difficult than reading silently because minority students must identify and say each individual word correctly. Similarly, teachers who view dialects as inferior

create literacy problems for second language learners. But the problem of dialect is lessened if reading is defined as making sense of print and word-perfect oral reading is not expected. Moreover, claims Smith, although some teachers insist that all students learn to speak good English, changing the way students speak creates intellectual and emotional confusion for students, as well as anger towards educators. In addition, reading comprehension is often confused with content knowledge. For example, a social science teacher may insist that minority students cannot read well enough to understand the text. However, what may be lacking is not text understanding but background information on the subject's content.

Evaluating the Environment. Moreover, literacy assessment in the classroom must also include the student's learning environment and the instruction they have experienced (Rhodes and Shanklin, 1993). For example, assessment that focuses only on the student assumes that reading or writing problems are caused by the student. However, assessment that looks beyond the student in order to locate the problem recognizes that the successes and problems of students are a result of various components, such as learning environment and instruction. Thus, teachers need to know that the literacy of minority students can be helped by controlling not only environment but also instruction.

Learned Helplessness. However, in absence of a safe and nurturing environment in the classroom, students may experience not only repeated failures but also began to view themselves as incapable of learning and develop learned helplessness behaviors (Coley and Hoffman, 1990). Coley and Hoffman claim that metacognitive strategies can help students deal with both the intellectual and affective needs of learned helplessness. For instance,

in a classroom model for at-risk sixth grade students, the goals include learning three comprehension strategies, as well as how to help at-risk students view themselves as capable learners. In question response cues, students learn how to ask and answer reading comprehension questions. As graphic stimuli for different types of questions, these question response cues provide a thinking frame of reference. Moreover, in the double entry/response journals, journal pages are divided into two sections. The first section provides room for a student entry at the left, such as a key reading word. However, the second section allows students not only to reflect upon and respond to the work but also provides a place for teachers' responses. Finally, students are also encouraged to evaluate their own thinking. Thus, each week students respond to questions, such as, "What kind of thinker were you this week?"

Resistance to Learning. In the classroom, literacy failure may result as a resistance to learning and the cultural differences between the values of the school and those of the learners. For example, in Davis (1991), Bourdieu theorizes that differences between the values of the school and those of some learners is common. In adult literacy programs, many nonreaders belong to subordinate social groups who are aware of the differences in the values of subordinate and dominant groups. Consequently, members of a subordinate group may resist learning because of the traditional values of the school. For example, resistance by learners may be either overt or subtle. Students may enroll in a program but drop out quickly. However, resisters may also stay in school in order to learn the dominant language of society and later use this knowledge for educational or political activities. Moreover, resisters may not resist the content of the program but the values of the program. Consequently, resisters may find the content irrelevant to their lives, since, as

Fingeret (1983) notes, the ability to read is but one skill that contributes to the exchange of skills. In addition, resisters are aware of the consequences of resistance. For example, resistant readers know they if they learn to read, all of their relationships in their social network would shift.

Educating Teachers

Accepting New Assumptions. According to Rhodes and Shanklin (1993), the best way for teachers to think about change is to reflect on what they already know, such as how they encourage their students' to learn or change and then apply the same principles to themselves. These principles may include demonstration, ownership, risk-taking, and choice, as well as self-assessment, collaboration, response and reflection, and approximation. Moreover, accepting assumptions about change can be very useful. For example, in a four year staff development program implemented in the Denver Public Schools, four assumptions guided their change. First, teachers should not assume that their ideas of what the change should be is the one that should be implemented. Second, teachers should assume that any innovation requires individuals to work out their own meaning. Moreover, because change brings conflict, teachers should understand that conflict and disagreement in change are inevitable. Finally, teachers can assume that they, like others, often need pressure to change but change will be effective only if teachers develop their own positions or communicate with other teachers.

A Model of Teaching. Change in teaching, however, requires a model of teaching (Freeman, 1989). As a decision-making process, claims Freeman, a model of teaching should include knowledge, skills, attitude, and awareness. For example, knowledge is what is being taught, to whom it is being taught, and where it is being taught. However, skills are the how of teaching and include

methods, techniques, activities, and materials. Taken together, knowledge and skills form not only the knowledge base of teaching but also the basis for most language teacher education. However, attitude, according to Freeman, is the principal constituent of language teaching. Defined as the stance one adopts for oneself, the activity of teaching, and the learning one engages in, attitude accounts for the teacher's effectiveness in the classroom. In addition, Freeman suggests a fourth constituent: awareness. As the capacity to recognize and monitor the attention one is giving to something, awareness causes teachers to act on situations of which one is aware.

The Process of Change. As an example of a teacher in the process of change, Courtland (1992) documented one elementary school teacher's experiences as he implemented a process writing approach. In his first year, the teacher implemented journals with his 4/5 class and mainly concerned himself with the technical aspects of writing. In his second year, the teacher attended to one problem at a time, resolved it, and moved on. Although his students were receiving many opportunities to write, the teacher ignored the students' stages of development. In his third year, however, Courtland claims that an appreciation of the conceptual issues in process writing emerged. Consequently, the teacher developed whole class management strategies but continued to have difficulty in addressing students' instructional needs.

Teaching Teachers. The problems associated with change can be minimized when teachers are given staff development courses. For example, in teaching education classes for teachers of second-language students, Freeman and Freeman (1988) help their students explore not only old attitudes and methods but also new attitudes and approaches. Consequently, Freeman and Freeman organize their developmental courses in ways that allow them to

demonstrate whole language approaches for second language acquisition. For example, in lesson shares, short demonstration lessons are provided in order to explore techniques for content area lessons. Later, students evaluate the demonstration lessons by using a whole language checklist, as well as share lessons that have worked for them in the past. Moreover, in ESL method share, education students study second language teaching methods. Consequently, students not only become experts on the methods of study but also later demonstrate their knowledge through a sample lesson. Furthermore, teacher education students also conduct a case study. Thus, students focus on how second language learners gain English by examining the data gathered and reflected in class readings. Moreover, in an ESL methods course, education students plan a position paper on the best way to teach a second language. Consequently, students talk about the paper, as well as share their ideas with one another. The position paper, according to Freeman and Freeman, encourages students to outline their beliefs about learning, as well as the methods they would use to support literacy. Finally, in student responses, education students provide Freeman and Freeman with information to plan future lessons by responding to class readings.

Tutors. Moreover, because adult English as a second language (ESL) classes often require the use of bilingual tutors, a non directive combinatory model was used to teach bilingual tutors with a minimum of assistance from instructors. For instance, according to D'Annunzio (1990), the typical tutorial programs do not meet the instructional needs of ESL students. However, after a short training period, which includes accepting dictations, translating dictations, as well as individualized reading and expressive writing, D'Annunzio claims that even pedagogically unsophisticated bilinguals can become effective

tutors and trainers. For example, in one school, one Hispanic and two Cambodian bilingual tutors were given two training sessions on the use of LEA. For the first week of instruction, the tutors took whole class dictations from students who provided a sentence or two from a class-selected theme. After each contribution, the story was translated into English by the tutors. Thus, students related a personal story in Khmer or Spanish before the tutors transcribed the stories into English. The tutors also pronounced and pointed to each word as it was written, eventually reading the entire selection to the student. The tutor then pointed to each word, pacing the student as they read the story together. Later, the students returned to their seat and tried to read the story silently, underlining each word recognized, as well as later rereading the story to the tutor. If the students still recognized an underlined word in context, the word was printed on a separate sheet. The tutor used a window card to determine ease and accuracy of recall. Words recognized in isolation were deposited in the student's new word bank. Moreover, D'Annunzio (1990) claimed that once some fluency in reading was acquired, students dictated their stories and were introduced to individualized reading. Basically a non-directive procedure, individual reading allowed students to go to the library to select and read books. In addition, while still engaged in individualized readings, minority students continued their story telling through expressive writing. At this time, the basic assumption was that students develop written expression by writing.

Renewing Trust. Shannon (1989) in Broken Promises attempts to explain how promises were made and broken to teachers and students of literacy, leaving both of them alienated from the schools that could provide it. Like the rest of American society, Shannon claims, schools internalized the

technological ideology that underlies traditional literacy, textbooks, and tests. However, in The Struggle to Continue, Shannon describes the philosophies and practices of alternative literacy programs. For example, under the whole language umbrella, teachers take charge of their own classrooms. In collaboration, teachers also become learners as they discuss whole language techniques and strategies. In critical literacy, students become active in their own literacy, as well as look between lines for unstated assumptions and questions. Furthermore, Shannon (1989) suggests that in an education for the enhancement of human freedom, critical educators propose educational practices that not only accommodate human diversity but expand human possibilities. As political proposals, Shannon claims, educational practices should help students establish “voices” which enable them to control their own lives, examine their own social contradictions, and discuss democracy as a means to social justice.

In conclusion, as teachers create a just and equitable curriculum, they risk only empowering themselves and their students. In cultural sites of equality, empowering teachers choose to transmit not only sanctioned knowledge, beliefs, and experiences but also the attitudes and values that confirm that all students are important. Similarly, through new texts, theories and strategies, teachers help their students gain literacy, as well as the basis of self-esteem, identity, empowerment. Thus, when all students are heard, participate, and contribute, students learn, work, and contribute to society.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND LIMITATIONS

Goals

Because no curriculum "is an island," untouched by those who read and write it or seek to use it for their own means, the goals for a literacy curriculum of empowerment include not only those for the literacy of students but also those for the empowerment of students and teachers through new awareness and choice in a school committed to literacy and justice.

Objectives

1. Student ownership. When adult minority students come to school, they do so because they understand the importance of literacy and its role in helping them become active and productive citizens in a diverse society. With social, political, and economic problems outside the classroom, minority students are eager to practice whatever is prescribed in order to achieve literacy and empowerment. However, because literacy is created, instead of dispensed, teachers must defer from giving prescriptions. Thus, instead of telling students what to do, empowering teachers ask students to use their own knowledge, experiences, and beliefs to create literacy. Moreover, empowering teachers help students not only to recognize their own role in their quest for change but also to set their own goals according to their own interests and needs.
2. Empowering teachers. To empower students, however, teachers must once again take ownership of their own curriculum. Thus, with the aim of teaching literacy, teachers choose, create, negotiate, and evaluate the curriculum in order to create literacy and new possibilities. However, ownership implies a

responsibility for a fair and balanced curriculum. Consequently, teachers of empowerment first ask, "What do students of diverse cultures really need to know and how can I provide it?"

Moreover, solutions to curriculum reform require teachers to have not only new theories and practices but also new understandings about the cultural and political nature of the curriculum.

Consequently, teachers of empowerment actively seek knowledge, as well as theories, texts, and practices, that meets the unique literacy and social challenges of their minority students.

3. A literacy curriculum of empowerment. Thus, in a curriculum of empowerment, students take ownership for their own literacy by building upon their own needs, interests, and backgrounds. However, teachers provide the literacy practices and experiences that help students learn actively and creatively, instead of passively and mechanically. Moreover, although a literacy curriculum of empowerment is guided by the students' needs for literacy, a curriculum of reform is equally guided by the social and political needs of minority students.

4. A just school. However, empowerment is gained only in a supportive environment. Thus, schools must honor not only the cultural diversity of its students but also commit to the educational equality of all students regardless of ethnicity or race. Moreover, in the tradition of American individualism and "can-do" philosophy, schools must trust their teachers to be experts in their own classrooms. However, with a history of traditional theories and practices that has failed to bring the culturally diverse to higher

literacy and empowerment, schools must first recognize the wisdom and vision of students other than those in the mainstream, as well as the idea that no one culture speaks for everyone.

Limitations

The scope of this project is limited to the use of adult Hispanic students in need not only of literacy but also the strategies and skills necessary for the social, political, economic, and personal transformation of their own lives. Consequently, even though some of the aspects of the adult literacy curriculum of empowerment may apply to elementary, middle school, or high school students, this curriculum project is not intended for their use.

In conclusion, in that all parts of the curriculum--students, teachers, schools, and society--contribute to the literacy of learners, all parts are important to literacy. Moreover, as separate "voices" in the curriculum, all voices need to be heard in order for minority students to receive equity and a literacy curriculum of empowerment.

APPENDIX A

The following curriculum is for adult Hispanic students who believe that schooling will bring them literacy, as well as a job in the city or a seat on the city council. As such, this curriculum is for Hispanic students, who have failed not only to gain literacy but also to gain the American dream of equality and higher pay in the land of the “free.” Moreover, this curriculum is for teachers who believe not only in the literacy of students but also in the empowerment of students. Thus, as a teacher in a community college’s learning center, my goal for adult Hispanic students was not only to create a literacy curriculum of empowerment but also to do so by risking the traditional curriculum in a forum of my peers. As such, I focused on four important curriculum concepts. 1. A literacy journey. Because good teachers grow to meet the needs and interests of their students, I took a journey into literacy. As a curriculum-maker, I examined not only my own attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors about literacy but also explored new theories, skills, and strategies. Consequently, in a forum of my peers, I not only questioned the traditional curriculum but also collaborated, inquired, and dialogued in order to create a better curriculum for Hispanics in America. In the journey, I became an advocate for students. As an instructor in a community school, I also raised voices, risked conflict, and created change. By changing old beliefs, theories, and practices, I created new goals and a literacy curriculum of empowerment. 2. Philosophy of education. If education brings a better life to students, then teachers need to know what they believe, why they believe it, and how to practice their beliefs. Consequently, I and my peers, collaborated, inquired, and reflected on the attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge of literacy. By thinking deeply about literacy, I also created a personal philosophy of education. For example, I believe that in a traditional skills curriculum, literacy for Hispanic students does not come easily and

sometimes not at all. Yet, when schools consider other more powerful strategies, such as those in whole language or critical literacy, Hispanic students gain not only literacy but also the power to meet their own needs and interests. 3. Schooling as culture. Moreover, as an advocate of students, as well as a curriculum-maker, I found that for a nation founded on democracy, freedom, and equal opportunities, America has not done a very good job of providing literacy and empowerment for minority students. As such, by sanctioning only the language and culture of mainstream Americans, schools contribute not only to the illiteracy of minority students but also to their low self-esteem, identity, and disempowerment. Yet, it does not have to be this way. Consequently, in the new curriculum, I planned not only for literacy but also for students to feel good about themselves and their heritage. In strategies, students will learn not only how to speak, read, and write English but also how to lower their resistance to schooling, overcome cultural barriers, and participate in equal relationships. 4. Ownership of the curriculum. As I explored my own attitudes, knowledge, and practices, I took ownership of the curriculum. As such, I asked myself, "What do Hispanic students need?" and answered, "literacy and empowerment." In placing my beliefs into practice, I also created goals for literacy. For example, in extended invitations, Hispanic students need to read real literature, as well as to think critically before writing for meaning. In providing a safe and nurturing environment, teachers also need to provide instruction that is culturally responsive, as well as based on new learning theories. In classrooms of empowerment, students experience important role models, as well as empowering equal relationships.

A literacy journey

Hispanics in America. When Hispanic students walk through our doors,

they start a journey into literacy. However, literacy for Hispanic students does not come easily nor sometimes at all. Nevertheless, Hispanics are not ignorant, deprived, nor unmotivated. As students of two languages and two cultures, they are prepared for the journey. With a strong sense of peoplehood and history, they want only to participate in the “American” dream. Yet, many Hispanic students feel alienated in America. Some students have low self-esteem and others feel marginalized by a society that promises but fails to deliver equal opportunity and justice for all. Most, however, are bright and capable of learning how to speak, read, and write English. As Hispanics in America, they want only the opportunity to participate in the journey. Why else would poor Hispanic mothers save their grocery dollars for baby sitters or working-class men attend night classes after 10-hour work days?

Advocacy. Although I have always been a teacher, I have not always been an advocate of students. I set goals, taught, and evaluated, but I did not always defend my students’ rights for equal opportunity, literacy, and empowerment. Thus, as a teacher of minority students, I started a journey for students’ literacy and empowerment. As such, I journeyed for a better curriculum than the traditional one of skills and drills, which fails to bring students literacy. In the process, I explored not only my own attitudes, beliefs, and practices but also gained the skills, strategies, and knowledge to create literacy, self-esteem, identity, and jobs. As such, my journey into curriculum-making was a journey to provide students not only with literacy but also with jobs and the power for Hispanics to be themselves in America.

Schooling in the community. Although our learning center is located in a lower socioeconomic area, hundreds of Hispanic students have only to travel a

few blocks to start their journey into literacy. As an off-campus site, our students can find us in an old shopping center across from the health clinic, a liquor store, a low-cost food market, and the welfare office. Because we are located in a high-crime area, the police frequently patrol. Consequently, from our school's windows, we often see police detain or arrest people suspected of committing crimes. Still, as an instructor for under prepared students, I think we are not in such a poor location. Although we are far from the schooling of most white middle-classed Americans, we are close enough to the the poor, illiterate, and disenfranchized to provide neighborhood schooling.

The journey. My journey into literacy was not mine alone. As I prepared to risk old attitudes, beliefs, and practices, I also prepared to bring six instructors and thirteen aides along with me. As the site instructor of our learning center, I was responsible for initiating change. Consequently, I wondered whether it would be better for teachers to struggle alone or to try to create curriculum together. As teachers in the learning process, we would benefit by collaborating on new ideas, theories, and practices. Together we could challenge not only old attitudes and beliefs but also form new ones in a forum. Fortunately, everyone else felt the same. Still, our staff meetings had never been about philosophy, theories, or practices. Discussions were always more about practical matters, such as, "Who was tutoring Maria last week?" and "Why does Maria not attend school anymore?"

Voices. As our staff journeyed into literacy, we raised our voices. In a forum of our peers, we voiced our own opinions and listened critically to new attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge. In staff meetings, we also adopted two rules of dialogue. First, everyone was to have a voice. Even though teachers had the final responsibility for curriculum-making, all staff members would have an

opportunity to voice their own beliefs and opinions. Secondly, everyone would respect a staff member's right to speak. Speakers would have uninterrupted time to voice their opinions, although the rest of us were free to add our own view points later. Thus, in our first staff meeting, I asked the staff to talk about their most important issues and problems. Some teachers wanted to talk about discipline and overcrowding. Other teachers wanted to discuss the days and times their classes would be scheduled. Still, a few aides wanted students to know that the learning center was for reading or writing, instead of for socializing. Because these issues affected our students, we talked, listened, and learned. Still, by the end of the first meeting, most of us agreed that we still had a lot to learn about literacy.

Beliefs, theories, and practices. Although students learn literacy in the classroom, literacy takes students far beyond the classroom walls. Consequently, in my journey for literacy, I hoped to lower walls and raise students' expectations. I wanted disillusioned students to believe in themselves, to raise their aspirations, and to embrace new possibilities. In other words, I wanted Hispanic students to learn how to be risk takers and to develop the attitudes and confidence to learn literacy. Still, none of this could occur without changing the traditional curriculum of skills and drills or the traditional attitudes, knowledge, and practices that quiet hopeful students. Thus, in staff meetings, my colleagues and I explored not only the traditional skills and drills curriculum but also the disempowering effects of the traditional curriculum on non-traditional students. For example, in the traditional curriculum, Hispanic students are met with the challenge of reading a standardized test meant only for English-speaking students. Similarly, Hispanic students are often asked to read from mainstream textbooks that assume all students share the same

attitudes, knowledge, and experiences. Besides the traditional, we also discussed the powerful curriculum alternatives. In our journey, we examined the skills and strategies of whole language and critical literacy. For example, in whole language, students are assessed, instead of evaluated or “graded.” Students read real literature, write in journals, and experience ownership by setting their own goals for literacy. Similarly, in critical literacy, literacy is not only reading the word but also reading to gain personal, social, and political empowerment. Thus, teachers create lessons that help students with self-esteem, identity, and problem-solving. In role-modeling, teachers also change the traditional teacher-student relationship by creating more equal relationships that empower.

Risk, conflict, and change. In risk-taking, we moved away from the comfort of an old and familiar curriculum. In conflict, we explored our beliefs for literacy. In change, we began to place new attitudes and beliefs into practice. In the journey, Bob, an English teacher, exclaimed, “What do you mean that I cannot hold my class until after 12! My students are here at 9!” Other teachers accused staff members of wanting to “water down the curriculum,” instead of adhering to excellence by teaching Hispanic students at their “proper” grade level. Similarly, some teachers believed that as we tried to create a better curriculum for some, we discriminated against others. As such, a few teachers began to seek territories and alliances. Although everyone wanted to be part of the solution, everyone saw the solution differently. Still, most of our staff was excited about creating curriculum and the resulting changes for the new year. Consequently, although we disagreed, we also agreed and compromised, all while moving forward.

Goals for literacy. As we journeyed away from the old curriculum, we

teachers set new goals for literacy. One of my goals for students is that beginning students be allowed to speak with an accent or to finish their sentences without being corrected. Louise, an aide, wants students to read English every day. Elaine, however, believes that students who speak and read English should also write in journals about their experiences. Still, Anne, an English teacher, suggested we keep a few skills from the old curriculum while adopting some of the newer ones from whole language and critical literacy. "Our students don't know how to punctuate or use capital letters," Anne said. "They also have trouble finding a main idea or locating details in a text." I agree. However, our students also need to read real literature and write in journals. Similarly, as minorities in America, our students need personal, social, and political empowerment. As such, students need to set their own goals, choose their own literacy activities, and experience more equal student-teacher relationships in order to be empowered.

Teacher as policy-maker. I have always thought of myself as a teacher of students. I have not always thought of myself as a policy-maker. Yet, in the journey, I was learning new ideas, beliefs, and practices for literacy. I acted like a teacher, posed questions and offered solutions, I also acted like a policy maker. I reflected on the policies of schooling, the cost of education, and classroom accountability. Thus, in staff meetings, I defended a curriculum that recognized the unique needs and interest of Hispanic students. As such, I argued for a curriculum of equal opportunities. I added attendance hours, analyzed test scores, and reviewed retention rates to argue for classroom space. I also reminded teachers that the Hispanic students of today are the leaders of tomorrow. At times, it was uncomfortable for me. Yet, my commitment to Hispanic students had forced me to look at the depths of my

beliefs and the powerful alternatives to disempowerment.

A philosophy of education

Thinking deeply. Every day, teachers think about students, skills, textbooks, and evaluations. However, in weekly collaborations, we teachers began thinking beyond daily lessons. As such, we thought deeply about what we believe, why we believe it, and how to place those beliefs into practice. In exploring literacy, we not only examined our own attitudes, beliefs, and practices but also examined our personal philosophies of education. Bob thinks he doesn't have a philosophy of education. "I do what works," says Bob, "and try to stay away from the latest fads in education." However, Janet, who has just completed her Master's in English, does have a philosophy, "I believe that the strategies of whole language work better than just teaching skills," says Janet. Still, Mona's philosophy is still growing, "Students need skills but they also need more, such as strategies in whole language or critical literacy." With Hispanic students dropping out daily, we explored what education meant to our students, as well as each and every one of us. I want to look at literacy not only from an educational point of view but also from a sociological one that considers literacy and power in America.

Values and beliefs. As we struggled to understand what we believed and why we believed it, we became philosophers. In creating a philosophy of education, we had asked ourselves not only "What do I believe about literacy?" but also "How can schooling bring a better life to students?" In one staff meeting, I spoke about my personal philosophy of education. "Our students come to school to speak English," I said. "Yet we know our students come to us for much more. Our students want literacy, but they also want jobs, as well as the power to speak to their children's teachers, the corner grocer, or the mayor

of the city.” After a moment, Ann, said, “I know our students want more than English, but how can we help students get jobs when teaching English is hard enough?” Ann is right. It is difficult to teach second language learners how to speak English with only an elementary education in their own language. Yet, I think we can do both. “Ann, how about ownership?” I responded. “When students take ownership for their own literacy, they learn life-long skills and strategies, such as independence and responsibility.” But our students don’t always want independence or responsibility,” said Elena, an instructional aide. “Sometimes,” she added sheepishly, “I’m afraid to let them try.”

“Melting Pot” mythology. As a philosopher, I try to dispell old assumptions and mythologies about immigrants and their struggle to learn English. For example, in the land of diversity, some teachers still believe that immigrants of the past were happy to lose old ways while learning English easily and quickly. Consequently, Bill, who has taught literacy classes for 30 years, wonders why Hispanic students now need special programs, more classroom space, and culture-sensitive instruction when immigrants of the past picked themselves up by their “bootstraps.” Some teachers, like Bill, believe that “Melting Pot” mythology is sacred. Nevertheless, I listen to Bill’s view points on students, teaching, and learning. Later, I also invite Bill to new knowledge. “Bill, you and I know that our country was founded by immigrants. Some immigrants learned more quickly than others, but some immigrants didn’t learn English without schooling. Special programs are not new,” I reflect. “For example, in the mid-1800s, German-speaking Americans had bilingual schools in Baltimore, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. In 1847, Louisiana also taught French-speaking Americans in English and French.”

The “American” way. We teachers have always taught language and

culture in America. However, traditional philosophies, beliefs, and practices have sanctified English-only as the “American” way. Yet, when teachers practice English-only, teachers imply that mainstream culture is good and by omission, minority culture is bad. Moreover, by sanctifying English-only as the “American” way, teachers ignore not only the bicultural nature of students but also blame students for their own illiteracy. Thus, in staff meetings, I asked teachers to describe the nature of students, as well as the misperception that Hispanics are “lazy,” “remedial,” and “resistant.” Because hundreds of students spend thousands of hours in study, I think our students are motivated, instead of “lazy.” As second language learners, our students are not “remedial” but learning English for the first time. Hispanic students are also not “resistant” to American English or culture. They are simply second language learners. Students who want to hold on to their language and culture while learning how to be “American.”

Philosophy and practice. Although second language learners do not think of themselves as philosophers, they have their own philosophy of education. As such, our students not only believe that schooling will bring them literacy but also that schooling will help them speak to landlords, get jobs, or qualify for promotions. Students come to school to learn English, study American culture, and “survive” in America. Thus, in staff meetings, I and my colleagues not only thought deeply about the literacy needs of students but also about their needs for powerful strategies in a bicultural society. For example, in the classroom, Hispanic students learn more quickly from bicultural textbooks meant for second language learners than from textbooks meant for mainstream students only. Thus, in the study of culture and literacy, Hispanic students read not only about hot dogs but also about the American flag. In

journals, students write about the first American president, George Washington, as well as write about the president of their native country. In addition, because Hispanic students are learning English for the first time, teachers understand that Hispanic students learn English in stages with every day language learned sooner than English for academic learning. For example, in class, Fernando, a beginning student, speaks English in every day conversations with his teachers and peers. However, Jesus, an intermediate student, speaks not only English but also reads American literature. Yet, Jesus, who speaks, reads, and writes English, does not write as well as Berenice, who is mastering not only standard English but also pursuing an Associates Arts (AA) degree on the main campus.

Schooling as culture

Unequal opportunities For a nation founded on democracy, freedom, and equal opportunities, America has not done a very good job of providing minority students with literacy or empowerment. Hidden by class and cultural barriers, minority students in school experience not only illiteracy but also alienation and disempowerment. Yet, Hispanic students are not ignorant of language nor culturally "illiterate." However, when traditional schools transmit only the knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the cultural mainstream, Hispanic students lose self-esteem, identity, and literacy. Schools are not neutral. Moreover, because Hispanic students experience lower power and status than mainstream Americans, they also experience lower academic achievement in America. Still, it does not have to be this way.

Needs and interests. Until this year, we teachers thought we were doing everything we could to teach literacy. In a traditional curriculum for mainstream students, we taught grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. We also explained difficult rules, interpreted confusing words, as well as rationalized and justified

our actions. However, in fear of cultural diversity, we also cautioned students not to speak Spanish in the classroom. Yet, when Hispanic students spoke English, we didn't understand them and asked them to repeat their words until we could. Nevertheless, we wondered why Hispanics avoided speaking English and why some students could not read. Yet, no matter what we tried, hopeful students struggled. Still, we had never used our students' beliefs, knowledge, and experiences for literacy. Yet, in the quiet recesses of our minds, we knew that not all students learn in the same way nor come to us with the same cultural backgrounds. Thus, in staff meetings, we asked, "What are the needs and interests of our students?" and answered, "literacy and jobs."

The official curriculum. As teachers of literacy, we never thought our traditional curriculum taught mainstream students but discriminated against minorities. Still, Hispanic students were expected to follow the skills curriculum. Consequently, upon entering school, second language learners struggled to read a standardized test meant only for native English speakers. In lessons, students also studied grammar, vocabulary, and spelling three hours a day, four days a week. Yet, students had trouble speaking to their teachers or understanding them in return. Moreover, with different attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge, Hispanic students read from traditional textbooks that assumed all readers shared the same attitudes, knowledge, and experiences. Thus, in meetings, our staff began to examine empowering alternatives to the traditional curriculum. "I don't know much about whole language," said Bob, a reading instructor, "but I like what I hear, especially when students read real literature." "Yes, I agree," said Mona. "When students write without having to know everything about grammar, I think students learn how to write more easily and quickly." Everyone agreed except Ann, a writing teacher. "Wait a minute! I like

whole language, too, but how can we abandon skills when Hispanics really do not know the grammar, punctuation, and capitalization of writing?"

The "hidden" curriculum. "What are you talking about?" asked Tom, while looking at his English syllabus at one of our staff meetings. "I don't have a hidden curriculum in my classroom." Other teachers agreed. "Tom, don't bother to look in your syllabus," I said, "It isn't written there." Maria, a second language teacher, explained, "Look, Tom. Not all students know the American way of schooling, such as being on time, expressing one's own opinions, or turning in assignments. As the culture of schooling, the hidden curriculum is what we fail to teach our Hispanic students, yet expect them to know." I wonder aloud if the hidden curriculum is not also reflected in a paternalistic, if unconscious, attitude towards minority students. As "experts" in literacy, we teachers find it easy to predict our students' needs, regulate their behaviors, and tell them what they need, instead of their telling us what they want. Yet, by providing all the answers, I wonder if we create the opposite of our desires, passive students, instead of hopeful ones.

Cultural barriers. It is hard to ask minority students to speak English only when they know only Spanish. Yet, at our center, it was policy. In the culture of schooling, students were reminded daily to speak English, instead of their native language. Nevertheless, at one of staff meetings, Marie, a clerical aide, opened discussions on cultural barriers. "Why do Hispanic students always speak Spanish in school when they come to school to learn English?" exclaimed Marie. "They'll never learn to speak English by speaking only Spanish." I agree. Hispanic students do come to school to learn English. Still, I questioned, "Marie, does that mean that Hispanic students cannot explore the meaning of a difficult word in Spanish or use their experiences as a basis for

new learning?" In other meetings, we also discussed the relationships among self-esteem, identity, culture, and literacy. "Hispanics are in America," said Paul, a new aide. "They should want to speak English and eat hot dogs, instead of speaking Spanish or eating tamales." Paul has a point. New immigrants will have to learn the language and culture of America. Still, I replied, "Paul, as recent immigrants, our Hispanic students are not only Americans but also students of two cultures. Consequently, our students have not lost their heritage nor found it easy to learn English in a school that disrespects or alienates them."

The culture of literacy. Because students bring their own attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences into literacy, the study of literacy is neither white, brown, red, yellow, or black. Yet, in the traditional curriculum, the culture of literacy is white and middle-classed. Consequently, in staff meetings, the staff discussed the culture of literacy. Our students are Mexicans, Guatemalans, Cubans, and Peruvians. They speak Spanish and possess a rich cultural heritage. Yet, this is not enough. As students in America, they hope to gain the language, power, and status of standard English, the culture of literacy. Thus, in curriculum-making, I ask Marco to tell me what he thinks a difficult English word means in Spanish. Afterwards, Marco and I discuss the same word in English. In the culture of literacy, Marco also writes about a favorite holiday, "I like the 16th of September. But when I little, I feel scared of the noise and the fire crackers." As a bicultural school, we also celebrate American holidays, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas, as well as Mexican ones, such as Mexico's Independence Day. Consequently, Consuelo brings fresh tamales for Thanksgiving, and I bring Kentucky fried chicken for the 16th of September. In empowering social relationships, Lucia invites me to her church social on Saturday, and I promise to make it. Still, Theresa, whose daughter is failing

English, wants me to call her daughter's counselor to talk about poor grades. "Theresa, if you call the counselor," I say, "I will help you speak to her in English."

Cultural resistance. No matter how badly our Hispanic students want literacy, it is not unusual for students to resist our efforts to help them. Consequently, many of our Hispanic students stay in school for only a few weeks or a few months. Some leave because they need babysitters, and others leave because their husbands want them home in time to make dinner. Yet, other students stay in school but distance themselves from their teachers and the learning process. At these times, it is not unusual for me to persuade, reason, and flatter. For as a teacher of students in two cultures, I understand that minority students are afraid of not being "good enough." For example, although Rosa silently reads in our lab each day, Rosa refuses to speak to me, to read aloud, or to take reading assessments. "No, no," Rosa responds to my queries, "I not speak so good in English." As a result of my observations, I suspect that Rosa is having difficulty not only speaking English but also reading English. However, Rosa is too embarrassed to ask for help. I too am afraid. What if I confront Rosa with my suspicions, and she leaves never to return? Would not Rosa's leaving be more harmful than her staying and giving me more opportunities to help her? Still, I try and Rosa resists. Finally, in exasperation, I declare, "Rosa, I cannot keep giving you books to read if you refuse to speak to me, read for me, or take a test. I really want to help you, but you have to let me."

Ownership of the curriculum

New beginnings. For all appearances, the new year began similar to those in the past. Students by the dozens were waiting impatiently in line to register, and we, the staff, as usual, were understaffed and hurried. Despite our

new ownership, politics and economics had prevented us from changing district guidelines, buying new texts, or eliminating all standardized testing.

Nevertheless, as a learning center for students who work, mother children, or attend school as part of their busy lives, we had committed to literacy and empowerment. By collaborating, inquiring, and reflecting in a forum of our peers, we had joined together to give students the skills and strategies for self-identity, confidence, literacy, and jobs.

Literacy framework. As risk-takers, we teachers had agreed to create curriculum in a forum of our peers. However, in the end, we were responsible only for our own curriculums. Consequently, although we risked, collaborated, and inquired, our individual goals reflected our own unique attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and experiences. As such, I created a literacy curriculum of empowerment by reflecting on four areas of curriculum. One, because standardized testing labels and marginalizes Hispanic students, I adopted informal assessments, which encourage, instead of discourage, academic progress. Two, because we live in a bicultural society, I also tried to sanctify the language and culture of Hispanic students. Consequently, our center no longer tries to make Hispanic students into someone else. Three, by adopting the skills and strategies of active learners, I hoped to empower students. In meaningful activities, Students would speak in genuine dialogues, take ownership of their own literacy, as well as experience equal relationships. Finally, because students are in and of their community, I tried to use the real-life needs and interests of students for literacy. As such, I asked students about their needs. Later, I created lessons that would demonstrate the skills and strategies of literacy and jobs. Still, because students need not only literacy but also empowerment, literacy was never at the expense of

self-esteem, identity, or self-confidence.

Choosing assessment. On the first day of registration, I was happy to see Jaime, a former day student, after a year's absence. As a married student with children, Jaime works 10-hours a day, 5-days a week. Because we are now open 12-hours a day, six-days a week, Jaime is happy to return to school as a night student. Still, Jaime expresses a fear of standardized test-taking. Consequently, with more than one way to take a test, I prepare to bypass standardized testing for Jaime. As such, I simply ask Jaime to read to me from a text I guess is within his level of expertise. Thus, Jaime demonstrates his competency at the lower reading levels before reading more complex passages. Because the frequency of miscues indicate Jaime's reading understanding, I quickly find a passage I believe will support and challenge Jaime in literacy. Finally, I also ask Jaime if he is happy with the reading level I have chosen. It is surprising how many students choose to read above or below a level I would recommend. Yet, students have my permission to read at the level of their choice.

Invitations. As a teacher, I invite students to tell me about their goals for literacy. Some students want to speak, read, and write English, but others want to study for their General Education Diploma (GED). Still, some students want to receive their Associates Arts (AA) degree or graduate from college in order to become teachers, engineers, or social workers. In creating a course of study, I start with the students' goals, needs, and interests. As such, Jaime wants to study for his GED in order to get a promotion in his factory. Consequently, I invite Jaime to work out a schedule that will allow him time for work, family, and schooling. As such, Jaime will attend evening classes, four-days a week, two-hours a day. In class, I also invite Jaime to read real

literature, as well as to write in journals. Because Jaime is a Mexican-American, he is also invited to use his cultural knowledge and experiences for literacy.

A safe environment. Because we teachers work hard to create a safe and nurturing environment, our classroom walls reflect the bicultural nature of students. Some posters are of Mexican dancers. Still, others show children from different parts of the world. Yet, some pictures display world maps that locate students' native countries. As an advocate of students, my favorite poster is of Juan, a former student. Because Juan is a singer, he is touring the country. Nevertheless, Juan has signed the poster and proudly dedicated it to his teachers. As a learning center, we also have posters that display the basic rules of spelling, grammar, and essay making. It is good to see culture and language posters side by side. It is equally as good to see the old signs, such as "Clean up after yourself," "Your mother doesn't work here," or "Speak English only," replaced by posters of a more supportive nature.

The cost of literacy. Because our students are poor, we try to help our students with the cost of schooling. Consequently, in the past, we provided students with hundreds of free grammar work sheets, instead of asking students to buy their own textbooks. Similarly, in the study of reading, we offered students a small library of free skills books for classroom use. Nevertheless, the cost of literacy was high since our staff did not require students to invest in their own literacy or to read and write beyond the skills philosophy. Today, however, one of our goals for literacy is for students to purchase low-cost English and reading textbooks. Thus, in ownership, our students buy and read their own classroom texts, as well as complete reading and writing assignments at home. As such, in the study of literacy, our students now read literature in whole

language, study writing in skills, and discuss problems through critical literacy.

A political paradox. Because Hispanic students are in need of empowerment, as well as equal opportunities, our staff often finds itself in a political paradox. As non-residents, Hispanic students often do not qualify for low-cost credit classes. However, as non-residents, they do qualify for non-credit classes offered for “free.” Moreover, although some resident students qualify for credit classes, they cannot understand why they should pay for credit classes offered for free as non-credit. Thus, upon registration, Hispanic students ask for the difference between credit and non-credit classes. To Raul, I reply, “If you take a class for credit, Raul, it will cost you \$23 a unit; but, if you decide to take a class for non-credit, you will still receive the same class without the fee or college sanctification. “Then why pay the fee?” Raul asks. It is difficult to convince poor students to pay \$23 a unit for non-degree applicable classes when they can get the same class for free. However, because all college exists on fees and state taxes, more classroom space is available for mainstream credit classes than for non-credit second language classes. Moreover, for some teachers and administrators, classes without fees violate the “American” way of self-reliance, independence, and responsibility. Consequently, our staff encourages Hispanic students to take classes for credit and more opportunities for literacy. However, if the fees are beyond their means, we help students apply for college fee waivers.

The struggle to read. Our students work hard to learn how to speak, read, and write English. Yet, our students struggle. As a goal for reading, I try to disabuse students of their belief that good readers read with dictionary precision. Still, in her search for meaning, Yolanda spends many frustrating hours looking up words in the dictionary, instead of trusting herself to predict

meaning. Thus, the new reading curriculum plans for Yolanda to use two reading strategies. First, Yolanda must read to gain meaning, instead of only to pronounce words. Secondly, Yolanda must try to predict meaning, instead of looking up every word in the dictionary. It is surprising how much easier reading has become for Yolanda since she is trusting herself for literacy.

Reading strategies. Still, because not all students learn at the same pace or read at the same level, we try to help students with reading strategies. "Teacher, what this mean?" Raquel asks while pointing to a word in a sentence. "Read the whole sentence," I encourage, "then see if you can guess a good enough meaning." At other times, when Raquel has trouble saying a word, I suggest she sound it out or try to find a look-alike word that would help her with sound or meaning. Also, because Raquel does not always understand English words, I sometimes ask bilingual classmates to explain words in Spanish. Moreover, in literature, Raquel reads to meet her own needs and interests. Consequently, from a small library, Raquel chooses to read The House on Mango Street, a Sandra Cisneros's novel on the struggles of womanhood. At other times, Raquel reads and discusses newspapers articles with her peers, such as those regarding crime in her neighborhood or discrimination in America. Still, Raquel also reads for skills, such as learning how to find the main idea or locating the details. Thus, in skills, Raquel only practices what her mainstream counterparts have spent a life-time learning.

Critical thinking. As students struggle to gain literacy, they also struggle to gain solutions to personal, social, and political problems. As such, I try to help students read, as well as to understand problems and to find solutions. "Why do you want to learn English?" I ask Manuel, a new student to our center. In reply, Manuel, who is unemployed, explains that since he speaks English

poorly, he has been unable to find a job. I understand. Still, Manuel will need not only to speak English but also to read and write English in order to get a good job that will support him and his family. Consequently, one of my goals for students is that they explore the cultural realities of the world they live in. As such, Manuel and I discuss the problems and solutions of job searching.

“Manuel, to get a job, don’t you need to read the “Help Wanted” ads or to write to fill out job applications?” I query. Because Manuel is eager to gain employment, Manuel is hoping that speaking English is the solution to his problem. Still, as we speak, Manuel begins to understand the need to read and write in America. Consequently, later in class, Manuel reads not only from his text but also practices writing letters in response to the “Help Wanted” ads in the Sunday newspaper. By the end of the semester, Manuel is not only thinking critically about his life but also taking action. “Teacher, I get a job,” Manuel says proudly. “I read the job in the newspaper and today I sign all the job’s papers.”

Writing for meaning. In the past, Hispanic students were taught to learn skills before writing. Consequently, Hispanic students are often reluctant to write for meaning before mastering the rules of grammar. I do not blame them. As teachers of literacy, we are at fault when capitalization, grammar, and punctuation are taught separately from writing to communicate. Consequently, one of my goals for writing is to help students write for meaning, instead of for skill mastery. “Yes, Maria,” I say as reassuringly as possible, “it is all right for you to write in a journal even if you have not mastered all your grammar.” Still, Maria, looks unconvinced. “Anyway,” I continue, “writing is not about grading but about your learning to write to your relatives in Mexico or to your children’s teachers.” Although Maria looks skeptical, she agrees to write. “Okay, teacher,” Maria replies, “what should I write?”

The writing process. When students write about what they know best, they write about their lives, beliefs, and experiences. With the goal of writing for meaning in standard English, students also write in stages, which include revising and editing in an audience of their peers. Consequently, in English, I ask students to write on a topic of their choice. Because students desire perfection, I also discuss the stages of writing students will pass through before completing a final draft. As such, Pablo chooses to write about a beautiful church in Guadalajara, his home city. However, Francisco writes about Nogales, a small town south of the border. In the learning process, Pablo reads his essay to the class, but Francisco, who is shy, exchanges his draft with only one other student. Nevertheless, both students revise their drafts from the comments of their audience. As such, Pablo adds words and sentences but Francisco deletes words and paragraphs. In their second drafts, the students edit. Because skills are important, Pablo and Francisco circle misspelled words and underline letters that need capitalization. Because Pablo and Francisco need the “language of power,” I promise to help them with both spelling and grammar tomorrow.

Culturally responsive instruction. Because the values of Hispanic students are important, I provide students with culturally responsive instruction. For example, because Hispanic students are often reluctant to speak English, I try not to correct Carlos’ pronunciation or grammar. Because English is Carlos’ second language, Carlos needs more time to formulate his ideas than mainstream students do. As such, when Carlos asks for his writing assignment, I allow Carlos to ask me in his own words and at his own pace. In the content of instruction, I also ask Carlos to read and write using his own attitudes, knowledge, and experiences. However, because Carlos is sometimes too shy

to choose a topic, I suggest a cultural event. "Why not write about your favorite holiday?" I ask. So Carlos writes not only about the 16th of September but also about how he feels when he sees the red, green, and white fireworks against a black sky. Because Carlos uses his cultural background for literacy, it does not mean that Carlos fails to gain the language of power, standard English. Consequently, I ask Carlos to check his writing for miscues after checking for meaning. I am proud of how many miscues Carlos finds on his own. Yet, I do leave Carlos to his own literacy-making. In inquiry, Carlos is free to ask me any questions on grammar, punctuation, or spelling.

Communication-based ESL. In the past, students learned how to spell, use grammar, and read vocabulary without ever learning how to speak to their teachers in English or to write for meaning. Consequently, one of my goals for Hispanic students is that they learn how to speak, read, and write by listening, instead of studying grammar or vocabulary. Thus, in a communication-based English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classroom, Marcello listens every day to his teacher, who speaks about language and culture in America. In literacy lessons, Marcello listens alone or in small groups to more English than he can produce. From textbooks, Marcello also speaks in conversations by greeting classmates, ordering breakfast, making suggestions, complaining, or apologizing. In addition, on the lab floor, Marcello listens to conversational tapes, videos, or television shows that emphasize every day conversations. No matter how Marcello choose to listen, he learns how to speak English more quickly and easily than when he was studying grammar or vocabulary books. Still, language does not occur in a vacuum. In a safe and nurturing environment, I try neither to replace English with Spanish nor change a student into someone else.

Role models. Although students work hard, every day we see students lose interest and drop out. Consequently, we try hard to provide positive role models for our students. As such, students read literature about Hispanic leaders, such as Cesar Chavez, who experienced not only discrimination in America but found solutions to cultural and economic barriers. Consequently, in journals, students write not only about Cesar Chavez but also about their own experiences, problems, and solutions. As teachers for the disempowered, we also invite students to see college plays, such as Evita in order for students to see Hispanic leaders in conflict and problem-solving. Most of all, we try to be positive role models ourselves. Although some of our teachers are Hispanic, most teachers are mainstream. Still, all teachers have high expectations for students. Similarly, some of our student workers are Hispanic and others are not. A few aides have college degrees but others are students. Moreover, Christina, an aide, studied and received her General Education Diploma (GED) through our center before being hired as an English-as-a-second language (ESL) aide.

Empowering relationships. Because equal relationships empower, I work hard to try to change the “one-up and one-down” relationships between teachers and students. As positive relationships for the community, I offer our students more equal teacher-student relationships by asking them to take ownership of their own literacy. For instance, Juan, a Guatemalan emigrant, found it difficult to choose his own classes, attend classes at his own convenience, or read and write on the subjects most important to him. On the lab floor, Juan was also unsure about his role in a self-paced lab that allows students to determine their own goals, choose their own lessons, or take a quiz when they are ready, instead of when the teacher demands it. Thus, two of my

goals for literacy are that students experience the power of ownership and equal relationships. As a result, in class, Juan is learning the skills, strategies, and knowledge necessary to meet his personal, social, and political needs outside the classroom.

Higher education and jobs. As a center for beginning speakers, readers, and writers, we try hard to teach our students English and empowerment only to let them go one- or two-years later. Consequently, we arrange student tours to the main campus, where students view classrooms, make appointments with counselors, financial aid, or admissions. Thus, one my goals for students is that they transfer to the main campus for higher education. Some of our students enroll in intermediate or advanced English-as-a-second-language (ESL) classes. A few also enroll in regular college classes, such as English 350 or Psychology 101. Most students, however, get jobs or leave to attend vocational schools. Still, it is not unusual for many students to leave our center only to return. As schooling for the Hispanic community, we greet our students warmly and embrace the opportunity to continue serving their needs and interests.

New opportunities. As a teacher, I know that curriculum-making is never finished. I also know that empowering students is a life-long pursuit. Consequently, I continue to look for new textbooks, software, and instructional strategies, as well as new opportunities to empower students. Similarly, as a site instructor, I know that I have a responsibility to educate not only our students but also our aides. Thus, in mini-strategy lessons, I demonstrate lessons in reading, grammar, or essay writing. At other times, I discuss the teaching and learning styles. Next week, a workshop will help aides learn how to cope with difficult people and situations. As role models for our students, our aides are naturals for demonstrating both literacy and empowerment.

The future curriculum. Next month, we will be leaving our old shopping center and moving into a new building a few miles away. As a school for the community, our learning center will be twice as large, and we will serve twice as many students. As part of an educational center, our college will also provide on-campus classes on site. Thus, students who find it difficult to travel 15 miles to campus will be able to obtain their Associate Arts (AA) degree on site. In addition, adult students will be free to take not only Monday through Friday classes but also weekend classes or classes as correspondence. Moreover, as part of a government grant, our learning center will receive 45 new state-of-the-art computers, along with \$30,000 worth of new reading and writing software. Finally, as teachers first, we will no longer serve as unofficial admissions or counseling advisors. For upon our move, all student services will be provided on-site.

Conclusion

Although our future looks bright, I still worry that I and my colleagues in the learning center are not doing enough for minority students. Still, in our literacy journey, we have adapted, adopted, and changed our attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge about Hispanic students, literacy, and empowerment. In a forum of our peers, we collaborated, inquired, and reflected on the needs and interests of Hispanic students. In staff meetings, we asked ourselves not only "What do our Hispanic students need?" but also answered "literacy and empowerment." Thus, as advocates for Hispanic students, we worked to create a better curriculum than that of skills and drills. As such, we collaborated to bring Hispanic students not only literacy but also equality, self-esteem, and identity. Still, as teachers of both literacy and empowerment, we understand that our literacy journey is not over. As we struggle to meet the demands of a

culturally diverse society, we also continue to struggle with a literacy curriculum meant to provide hope, literacy, and jobs for tomorrow. Moreover, as we sought to create a better curriculum than that of skills and drills, we did so by thinking deeply about our students, literacy, and empowerment. As such, I wondered why Hispanic students in our learning center not only failed to gain literacy in skills and drills but also failed to develop confidence, self-esteem, and identity. Thus, in a forum of our peers, we examined not only our attitudes, theories, and practices about literacy but also developed a philosophy of education. As such, I believe that schooling can provide a better life for our students. I also believe that as Hispanic students in America, students need much more than skills and drills. As students of two cultures, our students need confidence, self-esteem, and identity, as well as the strategies that will bring them both literacy and empowerment. For example, in the philosophy of whole language, Hispanic students learn how to read the way they learn how to speak, naturally with a minimum of instruction. Similarly, Hispanic students read real literature, as well as write for meaning for an audience of their peers. In addition, in the philosophy of critical literacy, Hispanic students are required not only to examine their roles in society but also to solve problems that contribute to their disempowerment. Thus, by learning empowering strategies, such as participating in equal relationships or taking ownership of their own literacy, Hispanic students become active learners in a bicultural society, instead of passive learners in a curriculum of skills and drills. Furthermore, for a nation founded on democracy, freedom, and equal opportunities for all, America has not done a very good job of providing literacy and empowerment for minority students. By sanctioning only the culture and language of the mainstream, traditional schools have denied minority students not only

opportunities for literacy but also opportunities for self-esteem and identity. For example, in the past, Hispanic students were not allowed to speak Spanish in the classroom. Similarly, Hispanic students were expected to learn how to speak, read, and write by using textbooks and practices meant for mainstream students only. Consequently, in the traditional culture of schooling, Hispanic students learned shame, instead of literacy and empowerment. However, in the new literacy curriculum of empowerment, Hispanic students use textbooks and practices meant for second language learners. As such, Hispanic students do not need to give up their heritage in order to be "American." As students of two cultures, Hispanic students learn how to speak, read, and write English, as well as learn how to participate in American culture, with pride in their bicultural nature. As such, our students are now hopeful that schooling will bring them not only literacy but also empowerment. Still, because Hispanic students are hopeful, I am sometimes afraid to confront them with the realities of American politics, race and ethnic relations, high unemployment rates, or the dismal graduation figures for minority students. Consequently, in trying to balance my students' needs for both hope and reality in America, I often choose lessons that emphasize hope, instead of reality. As a teacher of the illiterate and disempowered, I gamble that my students' high hopes for the future are stronger than the realities of politics and discrimination in America. Finally, in creating a literacy curriculum of empowerment, I risked not only my own attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge about literacy but also the comfort of the traditional curriculum of skills and drills. In risk-taking, as well as in a forum of my peers, I declared that literacy is more than speaking, reading, and writing. As personal, social, and political empowerment, literacy is not only reading the word but also reading the world. Moreover, as I took ownership of the curriculum, I also

understood the importance of ownership for students. Consequently, I gave up my role of literacy “expert” in the lives of my students. As such, I asked students to choose their own textbooks, develop their own schedules, participate in equal relationships, and express their own needs and interests. Thus, as a teacher for the poor, illiterate, and disenfranchised, I now plan for the strategies of literacy, self-esteem, and identity. For Guadalupe, a Mexican student, who immigrated to America six years ago, this has been enough. For this month, Guadalupe not only received her General Education Diploma (GED) but also enrolled as a nursing student on the main campus.

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